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THE PROBLEM OF OMNIPOTENCE IN CURRENT THEOLOGY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND LITERATURE
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
IN THE GRADUATE DIVINITY SCHOOL

BY

RIICHIRO HOASHI

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Scope of Our Investigation

Christian theologians have defined God as absolute sovereign (ens absolutum) of the world. "The sovereignty of God," says Charles Hodge, a modern exponent of the Medieval tradition, "is universal and extends over all his creatures from the highest to the lowest. It is absolute and there is no limit to be placed to his authority."[1] Such a conception of divine absoluteness in government leads us to the affirmation of *omnipotence* indicating that God is the masterful, decisive cause of everything. But the sovereignty of God is not to be conceived as a despotic domination, making God a taskmaster and men his slaves. "Although the sovereignty," says Hodge, "is thus universal and absolute, it is the sovereignty of wisdom, holiness, and love."[2] So with omnipotence. Practical interests require modifications of the divine almightiness. We do not want to conceive God as mere uncontrolled and uncontrollable power. We cannot think him to be a brute force blindly acting without aim and end. The very idea of God seems to imply unmistakably his moral and rational character, as Hodge says, with wisdom, holiness, and love. The almightiness of God then must be subject to rational and moral direction. The divine power, however absolute and infinitely resourceful, should be expressed in limited ways in accordance with the intrinsic nature and character of God. Now the problem is: how are these practical limitations to be harmonized with the idea of omnipotence which literally signifies an absolute power? "How can God," asks James Ward, "be omnipotent, and yet be limited?" The ideas of creation and of God as creator imply a self-limitation of divine activity in a definite way, and this self-limitation means nothing but a limitation. As soon as God has created anything in a definite way, can we still call him absolutely free? If God is to act in limited ways, can we still call him almighty? The problem has long given much trouble to theological writers, but they are unwilling to give up the conception of omnipotence. Consequently they affirm the idea of divine power with diverse modifications. The task of this thesis is to see whether such modifications do not so undermine the con-

[1] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 440.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 441.

ception of omnipotence as to leave no actual content in the term. If we frankly assume a limited omnipotence as acceptable to our thought, a further task is to see whether this modified omnipotence is compatible with facts of practical life. We shall finally ask how the conception of divine power should be defined in order to meet adequately the practical religious needs of man.

The Main Problems Involved

(1) The Problem of Evolution. God's world, as shown by modern sciences, seems to be developing from the lower to the higher, from the simple to the complex, from the worse to the better, through a tedious method of evolution which implies incidental waste and much blundering, destruction and decay, suffering and sacrifice, as the cost of progress. If God is omnipotent, why does he not accomplish his task of creation at once instead of by the slow process of evolution which as a means is in itself useless? Or shall we say that evolution is only in appearance and that things are all complete and perfect as a whole?

(2) The Problem of Imperfection. If the world is perfect as a whole, or God the creator is a perfect Being, we may next ask, why is there the sense of imperfection in life and nature? Are they illusory, only real as phenomenal in our finite view? If God is omnipotent, can he not do away even with such illusion at once and make us feel more at home in this universe? If imperfections are real, the problem would be still more vexed. How can God, omnipotent and perfect as he is, put up with imperfections in his created universe? Why, for instance, does death exist which is at least an undoing of what has once been constructed and seems to be a failure of creation, if God is all powerful?

(3) The Problem of Evil. Not only death but life itself involves a vast variety of ills and pains, physical suffering and mental anguish. Why does God, if omnipotent, tolerate or, indeed, why has he created such evils as earthquakes, storms, floods, droughts, and other disasters which cannot be ascribed to human causation? If man is not responsible for them, who else but the author of the universe can be responsible for those ills? Shall we say then that evil exists in spite of a good God who is incessantly struggling against it and that he will finally overcome it all? If so, can he still be regarded as omnipotent, or shall we understand him better without such an awe-inspiring word as omnipotence? These are in the main the implications of the problem of evil.

(4) The Problem of Sin. Another companion problem is that of sin or moral evil. The fact of moral evil needs no proof. Human history

is often said to be a history of sin, and everybody is conscious of his own sinful thoughts and deeds. As to its origin, however, sin is usually attributed to human agents. We are supposed to have been endowed by the Creator with the power of free choice either to do good or evil. But if God made man who has originated sin, is not God the ultimate ground of sin? Why, being supremely good and omnipotent, does he not eliminate sin at once from the universe? On the other hand, if sin is inevitable to a moral system, it can not be in God's power to cut it out at once. Can such a God be called omnipotent?

(5) The Problem of Freedom. Finally we may ask, if God is omnipotent, how much of freedom can we have? If God is lord of all existence, are we to be held responsible for all that we do? Can he punish us for our errors and wrongs, while he is the author of all? If he is not the author of all but we also are authors of something, at least, creative in evil doing, can God still be called omnipotent? Does not our freedom defeat the absolute divine control?

(6) Problems Created by Denying Omnipotence. If these problems entail a difficulty on every hand with our conception of God as omnipotent creator, can the denial of his omnipotence solve the problems? If so, does not the denial imply the denial of his absolute creatorship, because, if God is the sole creator of the universe *de novo*, all the imperfections and evils in the world must be directly due to God, even though he is not omnipotent? Then, the nature of God as supremely good would be questioned since he is the *ex nihilo* creator of the world that embraces evil, although he may not be almighty. In the presence of such a difficulty, can we hold to his supreme goodness if we give up the idea of his creatorship as well as the idea of his omnipotence?

Our purpose is then to give a systematic and comprehensive view of different solutions of these problems offered by current theology from diverse points of view, and to indicate in conclusion the relative value of typical positions. With this purpose in view, we must first, before entering the main discussion, define the general conception of God in order to see clearly what place the idea of omnipotence, relative to its problems, has in the conception of divine attributes.

Theological Conception of God

In defining the nature of God, such divine attributes as wisdom, power, and goodness are useally expanded to the superlative degree to make them consistent with the thought of divine perfection. Charles Hodge, representing the Calvinistic type of traditional theology, asserts

that God is *ens perfectissimum*; "absolute perfection distinguishes Him from all other beings." The best definition of God, he says, is in the "Westminster Catechism," namely, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Exegetically following this definition, Hodge enumerates the divine attributes as certain perfections of God's essence revealed to human experience. God as a spirit, self-existent and "necessary," is immaterial and simple. This self-existent, immaterial being cannot be thought as limited in space. The infinitude of God, says Hodge, is not merely a spatial boundlessness of his substance but rather an illimitability of his being and perfections. God's omnipresence as to spatial relations points to his eternity regarding time. His timelessness leads us to conceive of his immutability as well as his omniscience. The changelessness of God however, says Hodge, does not mean his inaction: He thinks, feels, wills in time, and the result is manifested in the history of the universe, but God in himself is timeless and immutable in his essence and attributes. "He can neither increase nor decrease; He is subject to no process of development or self-evolution. His knowledge and power can never be greater or less."[3] "Being the cause of all things," Hodge goes on, "God knows everything by knowing Himself; all things possible, by the knowledge of his power, and all things actual, by the knowledge of his purposes." If God be ignorant of man's free act, his knowledge must be limited and "his government of the world must be precarious, dependent, as it would then be on the unforeseen conduct of men." Thus Hodge holds that the eternal God has a prefect knowledge of all events possible as personality implies the knowledge of himself and others. With the foreknowledge of all things, God is asserted, as a person, to have a perfect power of will or self-determination. "He may decree to permit what He forbids; He permits men to sin, although sin is forbidden." Omniscient and omnipotent, God can do whatever He wills. "He wills and it is done." But this absoluteness of divine power does not mean that he can act contrary to his nature—to infinite wisdom and love. God with his omniscience and omnipotence, says Hodge, would be to us an inscrutable power but not a personal God, if He had not the moral quality of holiness, justice, goodness, and truth in the supreme degree as the sovereign of the universe.

A more recent author such as Samuel Harris tersely defines God as the absolute personal spirit, "unlimited and unconditioned by any power

[3] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 390.

independent of himself. He is the all-conditioning, the Creator. The universe, with all in it that is finite, must be created by God and dependent on him."[4] The most typical definition, however, which we find among the theologians of today, is perhaps that which is given by Clarke and generally accepted by Brown. In substance it runs as follows: "God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains, and orders all." In nature, a personal spirit; in character, perfectly good; in relation to others, he creates, sustains, and orders all; his motive in relation to others is holy love. By "personal spirit" it is meant that God is "a self-conscious and self-directing mind."[5] "He is the one perfect and typical person, and man, as yet, possesses personality only in a rudimentary and imperfect way, as a growing gift which is gradually coming toward perfection."[6] "Perfectly good" means all possible moral excellence of God in the human sense of morality, as Clarke says, "when the best conception of moral good that is possible to man has been reached, it will be found that God corresponds to that conception, while yet he transcends it."[7] By "holy love" is meant "God's desire to impart himself and all good to other beings, and to possess them for his own in spiritual fellowship."[8] Omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, says he, are implied in the assertion that God creates, sustains, and orders all, for a being cannot create a universe, sustain it, and direct it to an end, without being everywhere present with his works, knowing all things, and possessing all power."[9] From the creation we learn, he continues, that God must be adequate to all its needs, in power, wisdom, and character. "God must be the most perfect being that can be conceived."[10] Wisdom in God is that quality by which he perfectly understands all things, and knows how to accomplish the ends that his character suggests.[11] Understanding holy love working in wisdom, we see there the character of God.[12]

Since God is conceived as the absolute Being, it is taken for granted that omnipotence, along with other divine attributes such as omnipresence, omniscience, and perfect goodness, must be affirmed. Virtually

[4] Samuel Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, 117.
[5] William N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 68.
[6] *Ibid.*, 68.
[7] *Ibid.*, 69.
[8] *Ibid.*, 72.
[9] *Ibid.*, 74.
[10] *Ibid.*, 77.
[11] *Ibid.*, 101.
[12] *Ibid.*, 102.

all theologians affirm the omnipotence of God in one way or another. But on the other hand, some philosophical writers, such as James, McTaggart, and others, have recently denied omnipotence in any form. Our task is to see in the following chapter (Chapt. II) how diversely the divine omnipotence can be conceived and in what sense it is affirmed by current theology. After having accounted for various definitions of omnipotence, we shall discuss, chapter by chapter, the problems which arise in the affirmation of omnipotence in each particular sense, and see how they are to be solved. We shall see whether the affirmation of omnipotence in any form would entangle us in insoluble mysteries (Chapts. III-VII). Finally, if we are to deny the term omnipotence as empty or misleading, we must see what kind of God we can have without the idea of omnipotence. This would be a definition of non-omnipotent God (Chapt. VIII). In conclusion we shall have a general résumé of our investigation and see what functional value is involved in the affirmation or the negation of omnipotence. And we shall indicate in closing the current tendency in the conception of God (Chapt. IX).

CHAPTER II

Definition of Divine Omnipotence

It is necessary, as was indicated in the last chapter, to define the concept of omnipotence before we begin the discussion of the problems. There are three general conceptions of omnipotence, namely, absolute or transcendent omnipotence, pantheistic or immanent omnipotence, and modified omnipotence. The first two are generally discarded by modern theologians, the first as absurd and the second as insufficient. A short account of the first two is necessary to distinguish them from the third type which is actually current in the present day theology.

Absolute or Transcendent Omnipotence

By absolute power, as understood by certain schoolmen and some of the later philosophers, is meant power free from all restraints even those of reason and morality. McTaggart insists that the term omnipotence must be used in this sense of absolute power, or else the concept must be given up altogether. "An omnipotent person," says he, "is one who can do anything."[1] McTaggart has no difficulty in showing that this conception is untenable. He brings forth the old subtle question: Could God create a being of such a nature that he could not subsequently destroy it? Whatever answer we make to this question, says he, is fatal to God's omnipotence. If we say that he could not create such a being, then there is something that he cannot do. If we say that he can create such a being, then there is still something that he cannot do—to follow such an act of creation by an act of destruction.[2] Again, says McTaggart, if God cannot do things logically contradictory, he cannot be omnipotent. Supposing that man's freedom involves freedom to sin, there would be no freedom of will for man, if God did not permit sin. So it is urged that God cannot give freedom to man by restraining him at the same time from doing evil, for it is logically incompatible. McTaggart however asserts that "even if the two were logically contradictory, a really omnipotent being cannot be bound by the law of contradiction. If it seems to us absurd to suggest that the law of contradiction is dependent on the will of any person, we must be prepared to say that no person is really omnipotent."[3]

[1] J. M. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, 202.
[2] *Ibid.*, 204.
[3] *Ibid.*, 166.

Omnipotence with McTaggart must mean ability even to do logical impossibilities; an omnipotent God must be able to act even against his own nature. If God is a god, he urges, whose nature he owes to none but himself, since he is generally supposed to be the uncreated creator of the universe, his nature must also be subject to his will.

Most theologians, however, maintain that God has a determined nature, and the inability to act against it does not impair his omnipotence. Indeed as Augustine says, "God is omnipotent and yet he cannot die, he cannot lie, he cannot deny himself. How is he omnipotent? He is omnipotent for the very reason that he cannot do these things. For if he could die he would not be omnipotent."[4] McTaggart's insistance on the true meaning of omnipotence to be a power to do anything whatever indiscriminately leads us to absurdity and no theologians of today hold such an unqualified conception of the divine power.

Pantheistic or Immanent Omnipotence

This idea is another extreme example of defining omnipotence. While the absolute omnipotence described above asserts divine transcendence, and makes God irresponsible for consequent contradictions and absurdities, pantheistic omnipotence simply affirms that God is the direct cause of everything that exists. God being completely immanent in the world of changing phenomena, everything owes its existence to God. But the vitalizing force that is adequate to the ongoing of this infinite universe must be regarded as an omnipotent power. Thus it was understood by Schleiermacher[5] who says that it is not proper to understand God's power to be ability to do what he pleases, but rather that God is the cause of all that is; that there is no causality in God other than what is manifested. There is no reserved causality.

This conception is unsatisfactory to most theologians. "This hypothesis," says H. B. Smith, "rests on an essentially pantheistic notion of what God is; that all that exists is simply an emanation from Him, simply evolution of his nature. This is contrary to the very idea of rational, intelligent, and independent being."[6] Genuine theism, says Sheldon, asserting as it does the transcendence as well as the immanence of God, "must hold that the actual is not the full measure of the possible. Supposing God to be true person, it is perfectly conceivable, so far as

[4] Augustine, *De Symbolo*, I, 1.
[5] Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube* No. 54.
[6] H. B. Smith, *System of Christian Theology*, 33.

mere power is concerned, that He could increase the sum of created being."[7]

Modified Omnipotence

Since the conception of transcendent omnipotence leads us to absurdity and since immanent omnipotence is rejected as insufficient for divine perfection, current theology proposes to navigate safely between Scylla and Charybdis by modifying the conception to meet the situation. It tries to make God bigger than a mere cause of what exists, and to explain why this 'bigger' omnipotent God acts in limited ways. "God is a free Spirit," says Clarke, "immanent, as always in the universe, and transcendent, as always independent of its limitations and able to act upon it."[8] Such a transcendent yet immanent God has unlimited power but expresses himself in limited ways. The idea of omnipotence here is decidedly modified by the idea of God's moral and rational nature. We may distinguish in this type three sets of definitions not essentially different from one another yet not quite identical since they put the more or the less limitation to divine omnipotence. The first of them approaches absolute omnipotence as its upper limit, while the last of them is near to immanent omnipotence as its lowest limit.

1. Quasi Absolute Omnipotence. Under this name it may be convenient to group the definitions given by Hodge, Shedd, and Strong. "We can do very little," says Hodge, "God can do whatever He wills. We, beyond very narrow limits, must use means to accomplish our ends. With God means are unnecessary. He wills and it is done. He said, Let there be light; and there was light. He by a volition created the heavens and earth. . . . This simple idea of the omnipotence of God, that He can do without effort, and by a volition, whatever He wills, is the highest conceivable idea of power."[9] God creates, says Shedd, all things from eternity by one act of power, as he knows all things from eternity by one act of knowledge, and as he decrees all things from eternity by one act of will.[10] The divine power is optional in its exercise. God need not have created anything. And after creation, he may annihilate. The divine power is not to be measured merely by what God has actually effected. Omnipotence is manifested in the works of the actual creation, but it is not exhausted by them.[11] Strong defines

[7] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 180.
[8] W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 180.
[9] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 407.
[10] W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, 345.
[11] *Ibid.*, 359.

omnipotence as the power of God to do all things which are objects of power, whether with or without the use of means.[12]

Accordingly, the divine power is qualified mainly in three respects: (1) Omnipotence does not imply power to do that which is not an object of power; for example, (a) Doing that which is self-contradictory such as making a square triangle, or the making of a past event not to have happened. These are not objects of power, and therefore it is really no limitation of the divine omnipotence to say that it cannot create them. They involve the absurdity that a thing can be and not be at the same time. "Logical impossibility is, in truth, a non-entity; and to say that God cannot create a non-entity, is not a limitation or denial of power, for power is the ability to create entity."[13] (b) Again, that which is contradictory to the nature of God is not an object of power, such as for instance, to lie, to sin, to die. God cannot do anything inconsistent, says Shedd, with the perfection of the divine nature. God cannot sin because sin is imperfection, and it is contradictory to say that a necessarily perfect being may be imperfect.[14] Another significant point which Strong brings out is this: (2) Omnipotence does not imply the exercise of all his power on the part of God. He has power over his power; in other words, his power is under the control of "wise and holy will." God can do all he wills, but will not do all he can. Else his power is mere force acting necessarily, and God is the slave of his own omnipotence. Another point of no less importance is the assertion that (3) Omnipotence in God does not exclude but implies the power of self-limitation. Since all such self-limitation is free, says Strong, proceeding from neither external nor internal compulsion, it is the act and manifestation of God's power.[15]

According to this definition, God has a nature which is rational and moral in the human sense of the terms. But it is asserted that the divine power can work miracles which are irrational in the sense that they "suspend" the laws of nature which we understand to be logical in the human sense. Yet in defense of miracle Hodge says that nature and its laws are subject to God, and therefore liable at any time to be suspended or counteracted, at his good pleasure; the laws of nature are uniform only because he so wills, and their uniformity continues only

[12] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 286.

[13] W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, 359.

[14] *Ibid.*, 360.

[15] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 288.

so long as he wills.[16] Such a power to suspend the law of nature as Hodge asserts seems to be tantamount to an absolute omnipotence. But since absolute omnipotence involves a flagrant absurdity in connection with the problems to be discussed later on, more recent theologians are chary of asserting even this quasi absolute omnipotence. We see in the following two groups typical definitions of modified omnipotence as actually held by the current theology.

2. Deterministic Omnipotence. Under this name we may designate the definition given by Brown; that given by Harris perhaps belongs also to this category. By omnipotence we mean, says Brown, that "the holy and loving God is really Lord of the universe, able to do in it all things which his character and purpose may suggest."[17] There is nothing in the universe as such which can prevent the working out of the divine plan. God is not hindered, as dualism affirms, by any foreign substance. Man cannot prevent the execution of the divine plan, nor can sin prevent it. Like every wise and consistent person, God is "determined" by his character. It is morally impossible for him to do anything which is inconsistent with this. God's power, says Harris, is inseparable from his reason; it is God, the absolute reason, who himself is energizing. This regulation is constitutive in the sense that the principle of reason, the contradictories of which are absurd, determines what it is possible for power to effect. It is also ethical in the sense that God's will by his eternal free choice is in harmony with his reason in perfect love.[18] Having created a stone, he cannot instruct it in knowledge, nor convince it by argument, nor move it by an appeal to compassion. After creating man a free agent, he must act on him, if at all, as a free agent, by influences adapted to a rational free will. He cannot change his will by almightiness any more than he can move a stone by eloquence.[19]

But this regulation of almighty power by reason, says Harris, implies no limitation of God. Instead of being a limitation or defect, it reveals the perfection of God as the absolute Reason. "If we regard God," he continues, "merely as the Almighty, he has power to do wrong, if he should so will. Free will implies power to do wrong or to do right. But God is not mere almighty power. . . . That which makes it impos-

[16] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 620.

[17] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 116.

[18] S. Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, 179.

[19] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 181.

sible for God to do wrong is not lack of power, but his eternal self-determination in love in accordance with the principles and laws of reason.[20]

As we have seen in the definition by Brown, God has a determined character which is intellectually wise, emotionally loving, and volitionally holy.[21] God, it is asserted, not only *does not*, as is asserted in the theory of quasi absolute omnipotence, but he even *can not*, act against his character. This is determined by his nature, and he cannot change it by his will. God by almighty power, says Harris, cannot change the eternal principles, laws, and ideals of reason.[22] The sovereignty of God does not imply that God's will is his law. "His will is subject in all his action to reason and regulated by it; therefore all the exercise of his power is in free will under the eternal law of reason."[23] Will-power reigning supreme above all law, imposing its own arbitrary and capricious commands and compelling conformity with them by resistless force, is the essence of despotism and tyranny.[24] It is clear, according to Harris, that divine law is not different in kind from the natural law and moral law which man knows, nor is the divine character different in kind from the human in its rational and moral aspects.[25]

God's omnipotence is thus more closely limited by his own logical and ethical nature than in the theory of quasi absolute omnipotence, since the divine law which is an expression or part of his nature is not considered to be subject to change according to his free will. God is a determined being, not free in the indeterminist sense of the word, although Harris and Brown do not hesitate to assert devine freedom in their own way, that is, in the deterministic sense. It might seem that God cannot be the absolute, "the unconditioned and all-conditioning," if he is under law and obeys law. But this objection, says Harris, would only be valid if the law were independent of God and imposed on him from without, but "obeying law he is not conditioned by any being independent of himself, but God finds the law in himself and obeys it."[26] God has, that is to say, a given nature to which his own will must conform but as it is his own self-existent nature God is not supposed to be really limited by anything whatever.

[20] Harris, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 221.
[21] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 105.
[22] Harris, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 531.
[23] *Ibid.*, 533.
[24] *Ibid.*, 534.
[25] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 142.
[26] *Ibid.*, 184.

3. Creative Omnipotence. This definition does not really differ from the former in content but has a different approach. The former starts from the determined nature and definite character of God, while the latter starts from the creative ability of God. Clarke gives a typical definition with which Curtis and Sheldon virtually agree. The Almighty, says Clarke, is not merely the all-Strong, but rather the all-Master, the strong Lord of all. In his mastership is of course implied power sufficient for such a relation, yet apparently the sufficiency of power was inferred from the universal control, rather than the universal control from the sufficiency of power.[27] An abstract conception of boundless might is far less effective in its greatness than recognition of the living God as acting upon all as Master, and using all power that his work upon so vast a universe requires. "So omnipotence, in Christian doctrine, is *adequate ability*. It is the sufficiency of God. . . .God as a transcendent being is greater than his universe, and the whole of his power is not exhausted or required by its demands. He is adequate to more than he is doing."[28]

As to the limits set to the divine power, says Clarke, omnipotence does not enable God to do what is intrinsically contradictory, or what is irrational, or what is wrong and unworthy of him. To make an old man in a minute is impossible, because irrational. He cannot make it well with the wicked while they remain wicked, because wickedness and well-being necessarily exclude each other, and an effort to combine them would be unworthy of God. And omnipotence does not include the power to do them. We may call this, says Clarke, a limitation if we wish, but it is better not to regard it so. The true idea of omnipotence is that of "adequate ability"—power adequate to do all works that express his nature and sufficient for his universe. God cannot do wrong. This is true; but it should here be added that God's inability to do wrong resides in his character. It is the nature of his power to work in perfect unison with his character, and his character is such that his power can never be misused, or turned to unworthy action.[29] God is said to act always in consistency with his holy and loving character. While there is nothing like mechanical determination, says Sheldon, the will of God finds its perfect standard in his intellectual and ethical nature. It is the requirement of harmony and self-consistency that the will should always follow this standard. The ground of moral and rational being

[27] W. N. Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 351.
[28] *Ibid.*, 352.
[29] W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 87.

is given us; nevertheless we are not actually rational and moral persons apart from will or self-determination in rational and moral lives. The same is true of God.[30]

Clarke also, like Harris, sets another limit to God's exercise of power. "God exercises direct control throughout the universe," says he, "save as he has set off spiritual beings with a certain independence." God has created free agents to whom he has given a certain power to do their own will, even though it be opposed to him. "By such creative action God has limited himself."[31]

According to this definition of omnipotence as with the preceding one, God's power of working miracles does not interfere with natural law or divine character. With Brown miracles are merely extraordinary events.[32] Miracles, says Clarke, appear supernatural to men but perfectly natural to God, being normal, rational, and intelligible.[33] When God so wills, says Curtis, beyond his habit that his volition is contrary to his habit; when the ordinary volition is not only outclassed but actually held in abeyance; when the habit must yield to make way for the extraordinary volition—then the result is a miracle.[34] Sheldon holds that freedom and power supply the necessary conditions of miracles. Miracles are simply God's free activity within natural law.[35] Miracle thus defined as God's free creative act is an expression[36] as well as a proof[37] of divine omnipotence. Now, since the creation of the universe itself is the supreme proof and the actual content of the exercise of divine omnipotence, let us see how the creation of the universe and its purpose are conceived by those theologians who espouse the modified omnipotence.

4. Creation as Main Content of Divine Omnipotence. (1) Creation. The manifestations of divine power, says Shedd, are seen in Providence and Redemption as well, but most prominently in Creation. "The peculiar characteristic of this exertion of power is, that it originates *ex nihilo*.[38] By creation, says Strong, we mean that free act of God by which in the beginning for his own glory he made, without the use of

[30] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 191.
[31] W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 137.
[32] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 223 & 226.
[33] W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 133.
[34] O. A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, 166.
[35] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 105.
[36] W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, 361.
[37] H. B. Smith, *System of Christian Theology*, 33.
[38] W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, 361.

preexistent materials, the whole visible and invisible universe.[39] Creation is not "producing out of nothing" as if "nothing" were a substance out of which "something" could be formed. The axiom of *ex nihilo nihil fit*, says Hodge, is not interfered with in God's creation *ex nihilo*. For "the doctrine of creation does not suppose that the world exists without a cause, or comes from nothing. It assigns a perfectly adequate cause for its existence in the will of an almighty intelligent Being."[40] It is not a fashioning of preexistent materials, nor an emanation from the substance of Deity, but is a making of that to exist which once did not exist, either in form or substance.[41] As to the proof, says Strong, physical science can observe and record changes, but it knows nothing of origins; nor can reason absolutely disprove the eternity of matter. For proof of the doctrine of creation, therefore, says Strong, we rely wholly upon Scripture.[42]

As already referred to, the doctrine of creation necessarily rejects dualism and emanationism. Dualism holds to two self-existent principles, God and devil or matter. With regard to this view, Strong says that it contradicts our fundamental notion of God as absolute sovereign to suppose the existence of any other being or substance to be independent of his will.[43] The emanation theory holds that the universe is of the same substance with God, and is the product of successive evolutions from his being. Strong makes objection to it on the following grounds: (a) It virtually denies the infinity and transcendence of God, by applying to him a principle of evolution, growth, and progress which belongs to the finite and imperfect. (b) It contradicts the divine holiness, "since man, who by the theory is of the substance of God, is nevertheless morally evil."[44] Whether creationism can escape the same objection which its adherent makes against emantionism is a problem, but as it will be fully treated later on, let us quote another example of creationism from a modest asserter of it. By creation, says Brown, we mean that the universe in which we dwell owes its origin to the intelligent and deliberate action of God.[45] The philosophical question of the nature of creation, says he, is of little interest to Christian faith, but "the real significance of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* to the Christian is to e

[39] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 371.
[40] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 562.
[41] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 372.
[42] *Ibid.*, 374.
[43] *Ibid.*, 381.
[44] *Ibid.*, 383.
[45] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 211.

found in its denial of such theories (dualistic or emanistic) as are inconsistent either with the real existence of the universe for God or with its complete dependence upon God."[46] Brown believes the *ex nihilo* conception of creator is demanded by the sense of our absolute dependence on him, but his conception of creation, unlike that of Hodge and Strong, is that of an evolutionary process ever going on with its divine ideal of perfection.[47]

(2) Aim of Creation. Theologians who propose the conception of modified omnipotence affirm at the same time God's creation of the universe *ex nihilo*. God has created the universe with his absolute power only limited by his own moral and rational nature, absolutely independent of any external power or being. We shall later see the logical outcome of such an absolute creative act, when we discuss the problems involved in the assertion of divine omnipotence, but to make the situation more clear, we will briefly show the purpose of creation as conceived differently by different theologians in accordance with their characteristic definitions of omnipotence.

(A) Those who hold to quasi absolute omnipotence affirm that the purpose of creation is the glory of God. "The glory of God, the manifestation of his perfection," says Hodge, "is the last end of all his works." The common objection that this doctrine represents God as self-seeking is answered by saying that God, as infinitely wise and good, seeks the highest end; and "as all creatures are as the dust of the balance compared to Him, it follows that his glory is an infinitely higher end than anything that concerns them exclusively."[48] The happiness of a creature, says Shedd, cannot be the final end of God's action. There would be no wisdom in this case, because the superior would be subordinated to the inferior.[49] Strong also asserts that God's own glory is God's supreme end in creation, arguing as follows: (a) God's own glory is the only good actually and perfectly attained in the universe; (b) The good of creatures is of insignificant importance compared with this; (c) If anything in the creature is the last end of God, God is dependent upon the creature; (d) The interest of the universe are bound up in the interests of God. It is therefore not selfishness, but benevolence, for God to make his own glory the supreme object of creation.[50]

[46] Brown, *Op. cit.*, 213.

[47] *Ibid.*, 214.

[48] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 567.

[49] W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, 357.

[50] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 400.

(B) Others who entertain the more modified conception of omnipotence also assert the purpose of creation to be God's own glory in relation to his creatures, but they include the idea of love along with the idea of glory. God is not impelled, says Harris, to act by any want, but by pure, disinterested love. He acts, not to supply his need, but to pour out of his overflowing fulness in blessing. All rational action is for some rational end. What then is the rational end which God proposes to accomplish by the action of his love in creating, developing, and governing the universe? God does all things for his own glory. The glory of God is his perfections and his action expressing them, considered as making him worthy of the esteem and approval of himself and of rational beings.[51] Hence God glorifies himself in dealings with his rational creatures. "He glorifies himself in sinners by exercising his perfections in all his treatment of them. He will act towards them in perfect wisdom, righteousness, and goodwill."[52] But sinners persisting in sin will lose the possibility of redemption. "God has constituted the universe according to the law of love. Therefore it is forever impossible that a person be blessed who has isolated himself in selfishness and alienated himself from God "[53] Thus in the punishment of sin also God declares his glory in the exercise of his righteousness. "The motive of creation," says Sheldon, "like that of all divine acts, is to be sought in the moral nature ot God, which has been defined as *holy love*. It was necessary for Him to create only as it is necessary for a generous spirit to do generous deeds."[54] It is inherent, says Curtis, in the very nature of personality to seek objective expression.[55] The initial thrust for any great creative work is the personal longing for self-expression.[56] So it is held by Curtis that the divine motive of creation was to express his moral love in a "brotherhood of moral persons."[57] Thus we see recent theologians lay more emphasis on the aspect of divine love rather than glory.

Summary

No theologians, as we have seen, assert absolute omnipotence in the sense that God can do anything whatever, even such a contradiction

[51] S. Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, 491, 494.
[52] *Ibid.*, 503.
[53] *Ibid.*, 504.
[54] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 236.
[55] O. A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, 193.
[56] *Ibid.*, 194.
[57] *Ibid.*, 195.

as to make and unmake the same thing at the same time. If omnipotence had to mean a power to remake even the law of contradiction to suit the situation, as McTaggart insists, God should be able to dstroy himself and restore himself again. Such a god may indeed be possible but only as a characterless monster and blind power. The omnipotence in which theologians generally believe is modified in relation to another important attribute of God, namely, his moral and rational nature. God as creator, sustainer, and governor of the universe is able to do in it all things which his character and purpose may suggest (Brown), no matter whether he uses means or not towards the realization of his aim (Strong). Indeed, if God cannot create an old man at once, as Clarke pointed out, his using means to realize his ends must be an ordinary method of procedure, but such a theologian as Hodge strictly adheres to the idea that means are not necessary for God, as he asserts that "God wills and it is done." Hodge and Strong, however, agree in saying that God as a wise and self-consistent person controls his power with his holy will; and so he can do all he wills, but he will not do all he can. Else his power is merely an impersonal force acting necessarily in spite of his will and God would then be a slave of his own omnipotence. More recent authors such as Brown and Clarke are more reserved in affirming the divine omnipotence. God is determined, as Brown says, by his character, just as a wise and consistent human personality. Hence it is morally and logically impossible for him to do anything that is immoral and irrational in the human sense of the words. Brown goes even so far as to say that omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything whatever; that there is no standard, external or internal, to which he must conform.[58] If this is so and there is an external standard for God to follow, he should be called finite rather than absolute, non-omnipotent rather than omnipotent. But Brown does not mean by "external" standard anything foreign to the divine nature, as he says that God is not hindered by any foreign substance as dualism affirms. Hence we must conclude that theologians generally assert omnipotence in the modified sense that the divine power is not limited by any external power independent of God, and that all the obstacles there can be for him are simply due to his own moral and rational nature and to self-limitations. Such limitations due to his own nature and will, say they, should not be regarded as limitations, and so they believe they can rightly affirm the divine omnipotence though in a modified

[58] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 116.

sense. Yet we must remember in fine that God who exercises his "adequate ability" as Clarke puts it, in creating, sustaining, and ordering things, is, in spite of his modified omnipotence, the sole and absolute author of the universe, not using any foreign materials preexistent, but with a purpose, as we have seen, either for glory or for love.

CHAPTER III

The Problem of Evolution and Omnipotence

Problem

(1) General Survey. Our world is a world of change, of evolution, either for better or for worse or with no definite direction. If it is changing into a better world, it is not as yet the best possible world. But if there is an omnipotent God in control, why is it not made the best possible world at once; why is there as it appears a gradual growth? Or if it is deteriorating, this would make it necessary to deny either the goodness or the omnipotence of God.

For those who deny the fact of evolution as does Hodge there is no problem at all. Hodge repudiates the theory of evolution because it refers, says he, "to physical causes what all theists believe to be due to the operations of the Divine Mind."[1] On the other hand, those who hold the conception of modified omnipotence, as do Sheldon, Brown, and others, do not recognize a serious problem either, since they have defined God to be acting in limited ways according to his definite moral and rational character. "God's method," says Brown, "is a method of progress, of growth, of development from the less to the more perfect according to an ideal determined from the first."[2] "Reason sees," says Harris, "not only that the rational ideal eternal in God is the fundamental reality, but also that the realization of it in the finite and the revelation of God therein must be progressive. The absolute Spirit cannot make a complete revelation of himself and exhaust his resources within any limits of space and time. . . . God, ever immanent in the universe, causes and directs its evolution."[3]

(2) The Conception of Evolution. Before we discuss the problem in detail let us see what is meant by evolution in the theological sense, since the scientific doctrine of evolution is sometimes supposed to deal a death blow to the theistic ideas. We do not propose here to discuss the relation of theism as to the fact of evolution, but we will simply give a few examples of a theological account of evolution by recent writers. The prevalent view among the 18th century biologists and philosophers, says James Ward, was the conception that an organism

[1] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, 16.

[2] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outilne*, 218.

[3] S. Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, 22.

was regarded to be in the process of unfolding that which is completely preexisting in miniature within the germ. But now this theory is all but superseded by the very different theory of epigenesis or new formation. "According to this later theory," he continues, "each new organism is not an 'educt' but a 'product'. . . . Its parts are in no sense present in the embryo but are gradually organized, one after another in due order as the term epigenesis implies,—it is now known too that in this progressive integration the individual retraces the main stages through which the species had advanced: as Haeckel in technical language concisely puts it: Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny."[4] Here all is history, the result of effort, trial and error, here we have adventure and ultimate achievement. The preformation theory on the other hand is only compatible with a singularistic or as Prof. James has called it, a "block universe" in which

> "With earth's first clay they did the last man knead
> And then of the last harvest sowed the seed:
> On the first morning of creation wrote
> What the last dawn of reckoning shall read."

This theory of preformation, a corollary to Leibniz's doctrine of preestablished harmony, is, says Ward, the only theory of evolution which deserves the name in its original sense of "development" or "unfolding"[5] as in Hegel's idea of *Entwickelung*.[6] But evolution for the pluralist in current thought, says Ward, is not merely the unfolding of what is contained in the germ but it is a development of a new thing, a new life through a creative synthesis of diverse factors. Of such synthesis experience furnishes instances at every turn. The timbre of a musical note is more than the sum of its constituent tones: a melody more than the sum of its separate notes.[7] For traditional theism, evolution is literally the mere unfolding or expansion of what is implicitly present from the first; in creating the world God is held to know and ordain all that from our temporal standpoint is yet to be.[8] So Ward contrasts the idea of evolution in the scientific sense of epigenesis or creative synthesis with that of traditional theism.[9] But in its proper scientific sense, says Sheldon, the doctrine of evolution does not at all preclude a theistic conception of creation. It simply affirms within nature a

[4] J. Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, 99.
[5] *Ibid.*, 100.
[6] Hegel, *Logic*, trans. by Wallace, 289.
[7] J. Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, 104.
[8] *Ibid.*, 109.
[9] *Ibid.*, 268.

process which culminates in the highest forms of organic life, and leaves us perfectly free to reason respecting the agent back of the process.[10]

(3) The Theistic Interpretation of the Fact of Evolution. Evolution as a scientific fact is well established, but as to the interpretation of its ultimate nature scholars differ among themselves, some affirming, others denying, the divine causation of it all. Ward, who tells us that evolution meant to the traditional theist only the unfolding of things preformed, includes in his own theism the claims of the pluralist and interprets the fact of epigenesis as causally connected with the divine initiative. "Evolution as a theory of natural science," says Curtis, "aiming to furnish an account of phenomenal relations in nature, I can receive; but evolution as metaphysics, aiming to furnish a philosophy of causation, I must reject as utterly superficial and unconvincing." Thus theologians are generally chary of recognizing a thoroughgoing evolutionism or epigenesis, but they always posit back of the evolutionary process the divine causation directly or indirectly acting upon all things, no matter how variously the facts of evolution may be interpreted.

"The idea of evolution," says Brown, "dominates every department of modern thought and life. The astronomer conceives the physical universe as slowly evolving from a formless chaos into the system of suns and planets which fill our heavens. The biologist applies the same law to the organic world, and regards the more complex and highly developed forms of life as having slowly developed from the simpler. The historian writes the story of humanity as a gradual emergence from barbarism into civilization. We think of God as ever at work, forming, transforming, and perfecting the moral personalities whom he has designed for union with himself. In the gradual development which science recognizes, from the lower forms to the higher, from the more simple to the more complex, we see the slow unfolding of God's providential plan for the realization of the Kingdom. Progress, however, is possible only because some advance faster than others, and breaking away from the prevailing type, set new standards both of thought and life, to which others are later brought to conform."[11]

The mystery of new beginnings which are a fact for the evolutionist requires for its explanation "the initiative of a living, a personal and holy God." To unite old elements, says Brown, into that which consciousness recognizes as new is as much an act of creation as to form from nothing the original elements themselves; and this is what God is doing all the time. Yet progress involves retrogression and the principle of conflict. "Both in biology and in ethics, degeneration and decay are familiar facts. Progress takes place through a struggle against obstacles, with the possibility of defeat or failure for those who fail to stand the test."[12]

[10] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 237.
[11] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 218 ff.
[12] *Ibid.*, 220.

(4) The Problem of Evolution and Divine Omnipotence. The facts of evolution as we see here involve the problems of conflict and suffering, of struggle for existence and elimination of the weak, and of success of a few and sacrifice of the many. But if God is supremely good and omnipotent, and he is the ultimate cause of evolution, why is it not a smooth affair, worthy of his perfection? If God is perfectly powerful and good, why can he not dispense at once with this tedious process of evolution which involves conflict and strife, defeat and destruction, failure and waste? But the fact that these exist seems to reflect the character of the creative power behind them. If God is so limited in power that he cannot make the course of evolution perfectly consistent with his good will, the presence of conflict and strife, defeat and waste on the part of creatures may be explained without infringing upon the moral character of God. But if we affirm the divine omnipotence at all, how can we account for the phenomena of evolution which involves so much of a sinister aspect? Is it not better to conceive of God like ourselves, as Johnson says, beset with limitations over which he triumphs by the use of infinitely varied appliances and adjustments?[13] We will discuss the problem in three ways in the following sections according to the different types of omnipotence.

Possible Solutions of the Problem

1. Possible Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Absolute Omnipotence. Since no theologians assert absolute omnipotence, it must be borne in mind that this proposed solution of the problem of evolution is merely speculative. Hence this solution is a negative one, and it is sufficient to see that the facts of evolution are totally irreconcilable with the divine absoluteness.

(1) Monistic Absolutism. Suppose that we could identify Bradley's Absolute with the God of theology. Let us assume that God is such a being as Bradley's Absolute, the Whole, the One, perfect and complete in every way.

"This one Reality of existence," says he, "can, as such, nowhere exist among phenomena. And it enters into, but is itself incapable, of evolution and progress. . . There is of course progress in the world, and there is also retrogression, but we cannot think that the Whole either moves on or backwards. The Absolute has no history of its own, though it contains histories without number. . . . And the question whether the history of a man or a world is going forwards or back does not belong to metaphysics. For nothing perfect, nothing genuinely real, can move."[14] "If you

[13] F. H. Johnson, *God in Evolution*, 87.

[14] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 499 ff.

are to be perfect," urges he, "then you, as such, must be resolved and cease; and endless progress sounds merely like an attempt indefinitely to put off perfection. And as a function of the perfect universe, on the other hand, you are perfect already."[15] If such a conception of the universe is held we are compelled to deny the fact of evolution and progress so far as God is concerned and to regard evolution as a finite view of things merely phenomenal. Bradley holds that there is no single irreversible direction in the time series as a whole, but that the change and succession involved in the idea of duration fall only in the finite perception of the different time series,[16] which are merely phenomenal since the Absolute is timeless. "The whole real content of this temporal order," says Royce to whom the absolute is identical with the divine, "is *at once* known, i.e., is consciously experienced as a whole, by the Absolute."[17] Evolution there is, but simply for the finite view,[18] and we must conclude, if Royce is self-consistent, that there is no evolution in the Absolute since all events are at once present in him. A dream is real at the moment of its experience, but unreal when related to a larger context of our total experience. The same must be true of evolution. It is real with us for our finite view but unreal for the Absolute in whom all events are at once present. But Royce is not self-consistent. He admits two different views even in the Absolute himself, i.e., temporal and eternal. Temporally viewed, says he, God is in process from instant to instant, from act to act. Eternally viewed, God's life is the infinite whole that includes this endless temporal process.[19] Thus there is evolution in God in his temporal aspect, but in his eternal aspect he is infinitely perfect.

To finite beings, however, who can have no experience of the Absolute in the *totum simul* the reality of the perfect totality where all things are eternally present is hardly conceivable. In criticism of the monistic view, Höffding says, "In the absolutist hypothesis time is regarded as resting on an illusion, on an illusion which must dissolve into nothingness when the true value—not arises, but—discloses itself. For this reason world and evolution in time, however necessary they may be, can have no real significance, nor reality, but must be regarded as the efforts we make in dreams. Even the labor employed in destroying the illusion, in making the dream-picture sink into the nothing which it is in order that we may live in the true reality, is itself an illusion."[20] The difficulty

[15] Bradley, *op. cit.*, 508.
[16] *Ibid.*, 216.
[17] J. Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Vol. II, 138.
[18] *Ibid.*, 141.
[19] *Ibid.*, 418.
[20] H. Höffding, *The Philosophy of Religion*, 232.

with monistic absolutism then is that, if it admits evolution in the Absolute, all the imperfections coincident to evolution must be attributed to the Absolute, and then God cannot be perfect in his power since he cannot eliminate those imperfections at once. On the other hand, if monistic idealism denies evolution as a mere appearance to a finite view, it can make the Absolute free from imperfection. But then the illusion of the temporal process with its sense of imperfections will remain forever, haunting and tormenting our finite consciousness, and God who cannot do away with such illusion for the sake of his creatures cannot be perfect either in his goodness or in power.

(2) Immanent Transcendentalism. Leaving the difficulty of monistic absolutism, let us consider God in a dualistic immanent transcendentalism. Most theologians hold that God is at once immanent and transcendent. The fact of change, process, progress, and evolution does not affect the divine Being at all, as he is transcendent over the course of the universe. "God is absolutely immutable," says Hodge, "in his essence and attributes. He can neither increase nor decrease." "We know that God is immutable in his being, his perfections, and his purposes, and we know that he is perpetually active. And therefore, activity and immutability must be compatible."[21] Sheldon also sets the conception of immutability in a strong relief. "Immutability implies," says he, "that God in all his activities must remain the same, too perfect either to increase or to wane, either to transcend Himself or to fall below Himself. Ethically applied His immutability signifies the absolute indefectibility of His goodness and righteousness."[22] Thus, God, absolutely immutable as he is, is supposed to be the cause or creator of the universe which is evolving in time and experiencing change.

On the other hand, such scholars as Mansel, McTaggart, and others flatly deny God's immutability if he is to be a cause. McTaggart, for instance, says that the idea of divine causation is incompatible with the idea of divine plenitude. "An event happens," says he, "and makes the state of the universe different from what it had been before. The cause is said to be God's timeless nature which remains the same before and after the event. . . . Then there is nothing in that nature which accounts for the change; and it cannot be the cause. If, while the so-called cause remains the same, the effect varies, it is clear that the variation of the effect—that is, event—is uncaused." Hence a competent cause cannot be changeless.[23] God as cause then

[21] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 391.
[22] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 170.
[23] J. M. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, 194 ff.

does not prove to be in so perfect a plenitude as to be changeless, and if not perfect in this respect he cannot be perfect also in power, that is, not omnipotent.[24]

Thus we see that God's absolute immutability, or changeless and evolutionless character is logically inconsistent with his being the cause and creator of an evolving universe. As soon as we admit that God is working in the universe for realization of certain ends, as the teleological argument of theism states, God can no longer be conceived as absolutely omnipotent. Waiving for a moment God's transcendental character, let us consider him as a designer, since this thought is really at the bottom of causal, cosmological, and teleological arguments, no matter how valid they may be for the existence of God. "Whatever worth," says McTaggart, "the argument from design may have to prove the existence of a god who is not omnipotent, it is quite useless as a proof of the existence of an omnipotent God. If it proved the existence of a God at all, it would also offer a positive disproof of his omnipotence. . . . Kant points out that the argument could not prove the existence of a creative God. As the design has to be contingent to the material in which it is carried out, it gives us no reason to suppose that the being who carried out the design created the material."[25] "The utmost," says Kant, "that could be established by such a proof would be an *architect of the world*, always very much hampered by the quality of the material with which he has to work, not a *Creator* to whose idea everything is subject."[26] If a wise and good being has used means to an end, says McTaggart, this is a positive proof that he is not omnipotent. "For means are those things which have no worth in themselves, but which it is right to use because, without using them, some end which has worth in itself cannot be attained. Now there is nothing which an omnipotent God cannot do—otherwise he would not be omnipotent. He could get the ends without the means, if he chose to do so. . . We may conclude then, that, whatever force the argument from design may have in proving the existence of a god of limited power, it is worse than useless as a proof of the existence of an omnipotent God."[27]

In conclusion we may say that we are to believe evolution as unreal or merely phenomenal from the view point of the Whole as in absolute monism. But it is hard for us to think our experience of change and

[24] McTaggart, *op. cit.*, 254.
[25] *Ibid.*, 199 ff.
[26] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, I Ed., 627.
[27] McTaggart, *op. cit.*, 201 ff.

progress as unreal while we have no experience of the reality of the absolute totality. In immanent transcendentalism God can be immutable, but then he cannot logically be the cause and creator of the universe. If he is the creator, he must be conceived as working in the universe with aims and ends. This teleological conception however makes it difficult to believe that God is absolutely omnipotent. If he is to act at all, he must act in limited ways. So we pass on to the solution of the problem by affirming a modified omnipotence.

II. Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Modified Omnipotence. (1) The Theory of the Fall of Man and its Difficulty. Those who hold to quasi absolute omnipotence deny or ignore the fact of evolution as already intimated, because, they say, evolution is merely a scientific hypothesis and totally unscriptural.

"Darwin's speculation" was, thinks Hodge, an attempt to trace the origin of living beings back to "one or a few primordial germs from which without any purpose or design, by the slow operation of natural causes and accidental variations, during untold ages, all species of plant and animal have been formed."[28] This conception is diametrically opposed, says Hodge, to the Scriptural doctrine which teaches: (1) "that the universe and all it contains owe their existence to the will and power of God: that matter is not eternal, nor is life self-originating: (2) that in the beginning He created every distinct kind of plant and animal" through his fiat as in the Genesis.[29]

Hence the theory of evolution must be dismissed as a mere hypothesis of materialistic science. According to this theory of Hodge the phenomena of struggle and conflict, suffering and sacrifice, destruction and decay in things of nature which the evolutionary theory points out are not due to the limitations of power on the part of the Creator, but they are solely due to the wickedness or corrupt nature on the part of creatures consequent to the fall of the first parents. The world was created perfect, with perfect man at its head; he walked with God and was loved by Him. But alas, a great catastrophe. Sin entered and all the fair promise of his incipient career was blighted. With his failure everything else went wrong. The very ground was cursed for his sake; the harmony that characterized the original scheme of things became discord. Evolutionary phenomena of destruction and decay, conflict and struggle, can thus be explained away as solely due as Milton says to "man's first disobedience." And thus, they believe, the divine attributes of supreme goodness and omnipotence remain untainted by the changed aspect of the universe.

[28] C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, 23.
[29] *Ibid.*, 26.

We need not here reproduce any further the argument for this denial of evolution and the ascription of such phenomena of discord to the human sin, because it has been abondoned by most leading theologians. Suffice it to show the difficulty which the older theologians feel themselves. Those who deny evolution usually concur in the opinion that man must be held as a special creation of God without passing through a divergent phylogenetic development from lower stages of animal life. The older theologians positively assert the Scriptural origin of man and his original state of perfection. Essentials of man's original state, says Strong, are summed up in the phrase 'the image of God.' If this is so, how can we account for the lapse or regress from the original perfection to the imperfect, sinful state of things today? Strong, accounting for the genesis of sin, says, "The Scripture refers the origin of man's corrupt nature to that free act of our first parents by which they corrupted themselves."[30] But how could a holy being fall?

"Here we must acknowledge," says he, "that we cannot understand how the first unholy emotion could have found lodgment in a mind that was set supremely upon God, nor how temptation could have overcome a soul in which there were no unholy propensities to which it could appeal. The mere power of choice does not explain the fact of unholy choice. The fact of natural desire for sensuous and intellectual gratification does not explain how this desire came to be inordinate. Nor does it throw light upon the matter, to resolve this fall into a deception of our first parents by Satan. Their yielding to such deception presupposes distrust of God and alienation from him. Satan's fall, moreover, since it must have been uncaused by temptation from without, is more difficult to explain than Adam's fall."[31]

Strong feels the difficulty at once and seems to suggest that it is better to conceive man's gradual ascent than sudden descent as more consistent with the divine omnipotence, but his conclusion is that man's fall from the original perfection is the fact of the universe and would not discredit the divine power.

(2) The Theory that Evolution is not Detrimental to the Divine Power. Other theologians, e.g., Sheldon, Curtis, Brown, generally agree in saying that the facts of evolution are undeniable, and men are gradually progressing from the lower to the higher as a goal of creation. The system of nature, says Curtis, is not a deistic machine, wound up once for all to perform its own set task, nor is it a pantheistic organism, forever self-sufficient for its own necessary process. "It needs God, the immanent and yet transcendent God. In every point and in every movement nature needs the Absolute Will. Forces, laws, processes, evolutions—

[30] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 582.
[31] *Ibid.*, 583 ff.

they all but express the personal power and manners of the Lord God Almighty. . . . Most tersely said, evolution is but a series of individual items planned for culmination; each item, after the start, getting from adjacent items an occasion for being, and also all phenomenal relations; and the entire series making one cohorent, ever-moving scheme to manifest in time the purpose of the Creator."[32] Man is thus to realize the divine plan by summing up in himself the best results of past evolution and growing gradually into a higher personality. The image of God in man is not a fact of the past but the ideal for the future. The working out of the divine plan in the universe through the process of evolution is therefore regarded by these theologians, not as derogatory to the divine power, but as a very proof of his omnipotence. Sheldon, refuting Mill's argument that a being who is in need of means for accomplishing his ends cannot be omnipotent, says that this argument overlooks the consideration that "speed or directness in reaching a given end is not the only thing to be regarded in a cosmos. Respect must be had, also, to consistency, or the harmonious relation of part with part. The fact, then, that means are employed is no token that the end is difficult to the Creator. We are free to suppose that every means that is chosen is subordinate to the total end to be realized so that that end could not be realized in its full extent without it, or at least without some equivalent "[33]

(3) Incidental Cost of Progress Justifiable. The use of means toward ends, though said to be unnecessary by those who assert quasi absolute omnipotence (Hodge & Strong), seems to be the ordinary method of divine workmanship in the view of those who affirm a more modified omnipotence, and therefore not incompatible with the idea of God who is to act in limited ways according to his moral and rational nature. But these theologians apparently overlook many other facts of evolution implicated in the unfolding of the divine plan. Brown seems to see both sides of evolutionary implications more clearly than any other theologian.

"Progress takes place," says he, "through struggle against obstacles, with the possibility of defeat, or failure for those who fail to stand the test." "This too," he continues, "seems to be a principle of very wide range. It may be observed in all spheres of life—vegetable and animal as well as human, and has its analogies even in the inorganic world. Science tells us that the types we see are only the survivors of a much greater number that have passed away. And what is true of the types is true also of the individuals within each type. Of the countless numbers born into the world only a small portion survives; and of these only a few reach maturity. Wherever we look in nature, from the highest to the lowest, we find the same struggle; first

[32] O. A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, 11-13.

[33] H. C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*. 64.

for existence, then for a life which is rich and full. What is true of the lower orders is true also of man. Such progress as he has attained has been through conflict. The races which are weak have yielded to those that are stronger. The prizes in every profession go to the few, and the many lag behind or fall by the way. From this fact of conflict it follows that some advance farther than others in character and attainment, while their neighbors fall behind or drop altogether out of the race. In the interpretation of these facts men part company. Some find it to be God's will that few should triumph and the many go to the wall—the doctrine of election. Others see in the struggle for self-development only one side of the divine government, whose obverse is the principle of self-sacrifice, that is, the voluntary renunciation and surrender of the more highly developed as the means of promoting the welfare and progress of those who are less advanced. This principle too is one of wide spread application. In animal life it meets us in the phenomena of motherhood; but in man, with his sense of obligation and brotherhood, it is transformed from an unconscious instinct to a moral principle. It has its ground in fact that men are not isolated individuals whose interests can be divorced from those of their fellows, but members of a race bound together by manifold relations, so that the attainment of one may be the means of advancing the many, and the sacrifice of one the means of blessing all mankind."[34]

Thus renunciation and suffering cannot be escaped as the condition of progress both social and individual.

Progress, as we have seen, involves suffering and sacrifice, destruction and waste. In order to bless a part of mankind, God apparently has to cause evil in another part. His evolutionary method is not unmixed good. God seems to be much limited by his means, though the means themselves are but his creation. Creative activity is indeed God's self-limitation, even if God had unlimited power. But how can God be omnipotent, being so limited even by the self-limitation of using the means that involve much suffering and waste on the part of creatures? Ward, answering this question, says, "An omnipotent being that could not limit itself would hardly deserve the name of God; would, in fact, be only a directionless energy of unlimited amount. . . . But God according to the theistic idea does not repudiate, but owns and respects his world, a world that is cosmic, not chaotic, from the first, and through which we may believe that one increasing purpose runs."[35] The point is that the cosmic order cannot be created except through the self-limitation of God which involves incidental cost for the realization of his ideal.

(4) Growth of God and Omnipotence not Incompatible. Granting that God's using of means is a sort of self-limitation and therefore does not interfere with his omnipotence, such theologians as Clarke and Brown seem to admit a kind of change and progress in God himself.

[34] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 220-222.
[35] J. Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, 244–245.

"The unchangeable God," says Clarke, "holds an unchangeable purpose, but steadiness of purpose requires variety of execution. Just for the reason that God is the unchangeable One, steadily working out the purpose that expresses his real self, he must act in a thousand ways, varying his action with the occasion for action, while he himself changes never."[36] This assertion of immutability is only a verbal one, if God must act in a thousand ways varying his action with the occasion. Brown clearly indicates his conception of the life of God which is a growth. There is in God, says he, the possibility of change, of initiative; he is not bound in his activity to the result of the past. It is not the denial of law, but the affirmation of the highest law, namely, the law of personality, which is the sphere of freedom and therefore of progress. A recent writer has well expressed, says he, the religious content of the doctrine in the phrase "The God of the future is greater than the God of the past." It conceives of God, he continues, as having a real experience, in some true sense analogous to that of man; as working for ends which he conceives of value, and finding his interest and joy in their progressive realization in history. It is not the character of God which changes but his activity and experience.[37] God experiencing an enlargement, though his character does not change, is a God of growth, of development, of evolution.

This interpretation suggests the inquiry whether such a God as this is not better regarded as non-omnipotent rather than omnipotent even in a modified sense. For a growing being cannot be timelessly perfect, and a being who is not absolutely perfect, as McTaggart insists, cannot be omnipotent. We may then, in the next section, inquire whether there is a better solution in the denial of omnipotence.

Summary: quasi absolute omnipotence makes itself more consistent by denying the fact of evolution, but its alternative of asserting man's original state of perfection makes the problem still more insoluble by the difficulty of accounting for the cause of the fall which is too superhuman to leave the divine omnipotence intact. A more modified omnipotence is compatible with evolution, since God is here regarded to be self-limited by the use of means toward realizing his ends. But this pursuit of ends is more adequate to a finite being than to a perfect and immutable God, and if we allow a growth to God as Brown does, together with the fact of such defects in evolution as conflict and suffering, destruction and waste, it leads us readily towards the affirmation of

[36] W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 89.
[37] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 104.

non-omnipotence instead of omnipotence even if we do not deny God's creatorship.

III. Solutions of the Problem by Denying Omnipotence. General Remarks: Evolution as Creative Method. We may suppose that God's method of creation is that of evolutionary process. It involves aeons and aeons to realize his progressive ends. Such may not be conceived by some as creation in the old sense of "creationism," but God using a method of long temporal process can well be called creative if all the materials that he is using are also of his contrivance.

Now two possibilities are open here, namely, God may be creative but not omnipotent; or he may be neither creative nor omnipotent. McTaggart has clearly analysed the problem:

> "If God is not creative" says he, "he cannot be omnipotent. If there are beings whose existence is as much an ultimate fact as his own existence, then he could not have prevented their existence, and therefore his power would be limited. But even a creative God need not be omnipotent. It is possible that he should have enough power to create this universe, or one of a rather different nature, or perhaps to have abstained from creating a universe at all, and yet that in creating he acted under limitations which would prevent him from doing certain things. We have therefore three possibilities: a creative and omnipotent God, a God who is creative but not omnipotent, and a God who is neither creative nor omnipotent."[38]

Since the problem of evolution in relation to the creative and omnipotent God has already been discussed, we will here present two possible solutions. The first proceeds on the hypothesis that God is creative without being omnipotent because his creative work is hampered by a foreign power, though not limited by his own method and material; the second holds that God is so limited by his own mode of procedure that it does not allow us to call him omnipotent. The first is represented by the the author of *Evil and Evolution* who introduces a foreign power to account for the existence of all such defects in evolution as conflict and waste, struggle and suffering. The second is represended by F. H. Johnson who conceives of God as creating the universe through a long process of trial and error method.

1. Dualistic Solution. Now assuming that God is back of all that is as the creative agent, let us see the solution of the problem offered by the anonymous author of *Evil and Evolution* who considers that God is not omnipotent because he is hindered by the intrusion of a foreign power into his dominion and he is constantly struggling against this diabolical invader.

[38] J. M. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, 188 ff.

Science teaches, says the author, first referring to the fact of evolution, that somewhere within a hundred million years of the present time the first faint glimmering of rudimentary life appeared on this planet. It was the very simplest conceivable form of life—minute speck of a slimy, semi-fluid substance which we call 'protoplasm.' From that elementary material, the whole world of animal and vegetable life has developed by minute stages, through a period of time which must have been inconceivably vast. And through the whole of that time the upward progress of life has been promoted by a never-ceasing struggle for existence and by the natural selection of the fittest for propagation. It is just because only the strongest and the cleverest of the combatants have been able to live—just because the weak and the timid, the ailing, the poorly endowed have died out or have been trampled out of existence in the fight —that all the higher forms of life, including man himself, have been evolved. But a theological interpretation of this fact is that out of all this discord and confusion God is slowly evolving harmony and happiness; when the whole scheme has been perfected, and right adjustment finally established, there will be an end of evil.

Thus science and theology, observes the author, seem to agree in a large extent, but "the being who, the preacher declares, and who, we would fain believe, is the very embodiment of all that is merciful and good, loving and just, has yet for millions of years, upon the clearest evidence of science, been working by every form of selfishness, cruelty, and wrong. . . . There is somewhere a fundamental incongruity between the God of nature and the God proclaimed in the pulpits, and to many minds it seems that there is no possibility of getting rid of that incongruity."[39]

This fundamental incongruity the author seeks to escape by introducing, just at the point where self-consciousness arose in the struggle for existence, a malignant Spirit who has caused maladjustments in God's creative process which would otherwise have been perfectly good without involving any sin, suffering, selfishness, cruelty, and wrong. A detailed account of the solution by this dualistic conception may be omitted here in order to avoid repetition since we are going to present it fully in the later chapters on evil and sin. Suffice it to say that the introduction of a Satanic power does away with the idea of divine omnipotence under whatever form, for it limits his power from outside, and his efforts to eliminate the malignant influence from outside seem almost futile in view of the fact that evil has existed for aeons of ages, although God may finally succeed in extirpating all the maladjustment.

2. Humanitarian Solution. Another solution is offered by Johnson in his book, *God in Evolution*. God here is conceived to be a finite being like ourselves, limited in many aspects in his creative activity.

[39] *Evil and Evolution*, by an anonymous author, 18-21.

"In the contemplation of organic life," says Johnson, "there passes before us a great pageant of creation extending through endless forms, from the single protoplasmic cell to the greatest and wisest of human kind. It is a sublime continuity of becoming, of training, of revelation, of creation, of salvation, of the highest inherent possibilities of the process. . . . But there is another side to it. The moment we descend from the survey of the great features of the process to the study of detail we are confronted by aspects of deity that are altogether foreign to our traditional conceptions of God. Here He discloses Himself as one who has employed, for the accomplishment of his ends, a long and elaborate process. His work gives the impression of one who moves slowly, tentatively, as it were feeling His way, to some dimly foreseen end by the use of instrumentalities not thoroughly mastered; the process is apparently characterized by many setbacks, by unfulfilled promises, roads that seem to have been built a certain way and abandoned. Although, viewed as a whole, the process is seen to be a grand and ever-expanding movement upward on the scale of being, there is also an immense amount of destruction and incidental waste; there is much conflict and much suffering on the part of creatures so constituted as to be capable of great happiness. In short, the God of evolution appears to be one who, like ourselves, is beset with limitations over which He triumphs by the use of infinitely varied appliances and adjustments."[40]

To defend this position Johnson simply uses human analogy over against the old way of conceiving God as transcending all human qualities and limitations. Criticising the traditional conception of God, he says that it has told nothing whatever about Him, but only what He is not. It has been a great and all comprehensive denial of the community of our nature and His, a destructive blight upon the natural growth of our minds toward Him. We are finite, He is *in*finite. While, however, declaring Him unlimited we have, from the standpoint of our knowledge, made Him the absolutely limited one, for, so far as his infinity is concerned, He is to us a meaningless blank.[41] Again, the author points out an inconsistency of traditional theology in attributing personality to the infinite, for it is impossible to eliminate the idea of a conditioned being without at the same time eliminating the idea of personality.[42] But the idea of God as limited is implicit in the idea of God as benevolent, as well as in the idea of God as a person. And practically we have always thought of the divine agency as characterized by an associated freedom and determinism similar to that which we find in human agency.[43]

So let us conceive of God, says Johnson, in human analogy as we understand man in our experience. "We are intimately acquainted with ourselves as creators, as bringing into existence a little world by the use of instrumentalities. By these instrumentalities we are, at the same time, aided and limited. We are absolutely dependent

[40] F. H. Johnson, *God in Evolution*, 86-87.
[41] *Ibid.*, 88 ff.
[42] *Ibid.*, 93.
[43] *Ibid.*, 96.

upon them but at the same time we bend them to our purposes, and overrule them in our interests. So doing, we accomplish great things, but these great things are characterized by great imperfections. The responsibility for some of these imperfections rest upon us, but for a very much larger class it is justly laid upon the *nature of things*. Just so, from the standpoint of this analogy, if we once admit the thought that He who created the world, as we know it, labored under limitations of some kind analogous to those which we have to meet and triumph over, we are ready to worship rather than to find fault. Remembering our own tribulations and triumphs, our hearts go out in sympathy and thankfulness for what has been hitherto and for that which shall be. Shorn of the word *omnipotence*, the idea of God becomes something less awe-inspiring, perhaps, less mysterious, less removed from us and all our possibilities, but on the other hand, it becomes something more real, more *intelligibly* worshipful, infinitely more moral and love-inspiring. He appears as one who shares the battle with us, who counts on us as supporters in the world process. Omnipotence divided Him, as by an unfathomable gulf, from us. We worshipped we knew not what, a being of inconceivable attributes. The God of evolution is, on the contrary, one with whom we can live in sympathy. Our devotion to Him is not mere fleeting incense, it is a positive factor in a world-not-yet-finished, in a process which may be advanced, or hindered, by the way in which we lead our lives."[44]

Since God is known to be one who works by methods that may be likened to ours, every experience of ours, every problem solved, every difficulty against which we contend throws some light upon the meaning of the way which He takes. His problems are our problems. His good is our good. His evil is our evil. He is engaged in overcoming as we are engaged in overcoming. We are *one* with Him, not simply in a mystical or metaphysical sense, but really and practically, in that His interests are our interests.[45] Johnson's contention is clear that it is better not to apply such a mysterious term as omnipotence to the divine Being who, like ourselves, is working under limitations and cannot attain His ideals without using instrumentalities which do not easily bend to His will.

As to the solution of the problem of evolution on the hypothesis that God is neither creative nor omnipotent, it is better to take it up later when we gather up in a concluding chapter the solutions of other problems on this hypothesis, for this will give a better perspective of the whole survey.

[44] Johnson, *op. cit.*, 90-92.
[45] *Ibid.*, 100.

CHAPTER IV

The Problem of Imperfection in Relation to Omnipotence

The problem involved in the fact of imperfection is bound up with the problem of evolution on the one hand, and with that of evil and sin on the other, because these also come under the general conception of physical and moral imperfections. There is scarcely any imperfection which is not to be regarded as in some sense evil. Thus theologians do not generally discuss the problem of imperfection by itself, still less do they consider it in its relation to the problem of divine omnipotence. Most of them take it for granted that this world of ours is full of imperfections and incompletenesses, but these are usually regarded as due to sin and evil. The problem of imperfection and its solution therefore can not be adequately treated until we discuss the problems of evil and sin. Here we simply present some aspects of the problem of imperfection in so far as it is separable from other problems.

Problem

We find a great many imperfections such as death, disease, discord, failure, error, ignorance, immaturity, etc., in our life in this world. We know that even we ourselves can conceive improvements and indeed are making improvements so far as we can. By doing so, are we daring to improve the work of a supposedly perfect creator? Why then, we ask, does not God himself improve our imperfect conditions of life at once, if he be the omnipotent author of all things? Or shall we say that our sense of imperfection is illusory—only real as phenomenal in our finite view? But if God is omnipotent, can he not do away even with such illusion at once and make our universe more hospitable to us, without such a nightmare? The fact of death, at least, seems to be an outstanding imperfection. Why, we may ask, does death exist which seems to be an undoing of what has once been constructed and seems to be a failure of creation on the part of the Creator, if he is almighty? Does our hope for immortality justify God? Does the ideal future vindicate the present imperfection? In short, if God's universe contains anything imperfect that can be improved, can we call its author perfect and omnipotent?

Possible Solutions of the Problem

I. Solution of the Problem by Affirming Absolute Omnipotence. (1) Imperfection Due to a Finite View of Reality. There is nothing

individual and perfect, says Bradley, except only the Absolute.[1] Now the Absolute, he holds, manifests itself in the world of phenomena or appearances. Indeed "the Absolute *is* its appearances, it really is all and every one of them."[2] Why then, if the Absolute is perfect, are its appearances imperfect? Bradley holds that all imperfections are mere onesided views of the Reality. "Error," for instance says he, "is truth, it is partial truth, that is false only because partial and left incomplete."[3] The same is true of the evil and ugly. "The predicates, evil, ugly, and false must stamp whatever they qualify, as a mere subordinate aspect, an aspect belonging to the provinces of beauty or goodness or truth. And to assign such a position to the Absolute would be plainly absurd."[4] Yet he says that ugliness, error, and evil, all are owned by, and all essentially contribute to the wealth of the Absolute.[5] This is to say the incomplete and imperfect are necessary to the complete and perfect. Then what is the true nature of reality? Is it perfect or imperfect? Good, truth, and beauty are for Bradley not the ultimate reality. "'Good" says he, "is not the perfect but is merely a one-sided aspect of perfection. It tends to pass beyond itself, and, if it were completed, it would forthwith cease properly to be good."[6] So with truth and beauty. His position is that the universe as a whole is perfect, and imperfections are but a finite view of things. Imperfections and defects are not mere negations as nothing is non-existent. But they are existent, and it is due to our finiteness, a sort of illusion when looked at from the absolute view point, yet real in our practical life.[7] This conception, if tenable, may help to solve the problem of imperfection by affirming the absolute omnipotence of God, since the universe as a whole is conceived as perfect, and nothing hinders the divine omnipotence. But why, it may be questioned, does the perfect Absolute allow the finite view of imperfections which are so real in our practical world?

(2) Criticism of This View. Contrasted with the above is William James's position, which holds that if imperfections are real, no absolute omnipotence is possible.

"Grant that," says he, "the spectacle or world romance offered to itself by the Absolute is in the Absolute's eyes perfect. Why would not the world be more perfect

[1] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 246.
[2] *Ibid.*, 486.
[3] *Ibid.*, 192.
[4] *Ibid.*, 488.
[5] *Ibid.*, 489.
[6] *Ibid.*, 409.
[7] *Ibid.*, 485 ff.

by having the affair remain in just those terms, and by not having any finite spectators to come in and add to what was perfect already their innumerable imperfect manners of seeing the same spectacle? Suppose the entire universe to consist of one superb copy of a book, fit for the ideal reader. Is that universe improved or deteriorated by having myriads of garbled and misprinted separate leaves and chapters also created, giving false impressions of the book to whoever looks at them? To say the least, the balance of rationality is not obviously in favor of such added mutilations. So this question becomes urgent: why, the Absolute's own total vision of things being so rational, was it necessary to communicate it into all these co-existing inferior fragmentary visions? Leibniz in his theodicy represents God as limited by an antecedent reason in things. By an act of what Leibniz calls his antecedent will God chooses our actual world as the one in which the evil, unhappily necessary anyhow, is at its minimum. Having made this mental choice, God next proceeds to what Leibniz calls his act of consequent or decratory will; he says, '*Fiat*' and the world selected springs into objective being, with all the finite creatures in it to suffer from its imperfections without sharing in its creator's atoning vision. The world projected out of the creative mind by the *fiat*, and existing in detachment from its author is a sphere of being where the parts realize themselves only singly. If the divine value of them is evident only when they are collectively looked at, then, Lotze rightly says, the world surely becomes poorer and not richer for God's utterance of the *fiat*. He might much better have remained contented with his merely antecedent choice of the scheme, without following it up by a creative decree. The scheme *as such* was admirable; it could only lose by being translated into reality. Why, I similarly ask, should the Absolute ever have lapsed from the perfection of its own integral experience of things, and refracted itself into all our finite experiences?"[8]

Many of recent English absolutists, he concludes, have confessed the imperfect rationality of the absolute from this point of view. McTaggart, for example, writes: "Does not our very failure to perceive the perfection of the universe destroy it?. . . . In so far as we do not see the perfection of the universe, we are not perfect ourselves. And as we are parts of the universe, that cannot be perfect."[9] The conclusion of James is that absolute idealism is decidedly irrational: "the *ideally* perfect whole is certainly that whole of which *the parts also are perfect*" but this is denied. It creates a speculative puzzle, says he, the so-called mystery of evil and error, from which a pluralistic metaphysic is entirely free. Thus if we assume the perfection of the absolute, the imperfections of the finites which are but his creation become an unsoluble puzzle. If, on the other hand, we admit the reality of our imperfections, a perfect Absolute should remove them all at once, otherwise he cannot be absolutely omnipotent.

II. Solution of the Problem by Affirming Modified Omnipotence. (1) The Perfect Ideal Justifies the Imperfect Real. There is no other possibility than to explain away the fact of imperfections in some meta-

[8] W. James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 118-121.

[9] McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Dialectics*, Sec. 150, 153.

physical way, if we are to affirm the absolute omnipotence of a perfectly good God. But such explanations meet the hard fact that defects and imperfections in this world are as real as our life itself. The solution, therefore, of the problem of imperfection attempted by recent theologians consists in a keener appreciation of the *ideals* toward which divine Providence is incessantly working. An omnipotent God acts in limited ways, using means to ends, because he is thus working out a perfect consummation which will completely explain and justify present imperfections.

"Man's dissatisfaction with his present condition," says Harris, "is incidental to his being constituted for the progressive realization of a higher ideal. Hence any objection to God's goodness founded on this incompleteness is futile." It is as futile a question, says Harris, as asking why Christ did not come to redeem men immediately on the appearance of the first man. "God has been realizing his archetypal ideal through countless aeons in countless worlds, and doubtless in the evolution of innumerable systems in space and time. At any point of time or space it is idle to object that God cannot be all wise, almighty and all good, because the universe is not finished to perfection, and we can conceive of something higher still to be attained. . . . The same principle applies to the rational individual. God has constituted every rational person immortal. God is seeking to realize in every such person the ideal of perfection in endless development in knowledge, power, and blessedness. Therefore man's every dissatisfaction with his present condition, his longing for what is higher and better, is incidental to his being constituted for the realization of a higher ideal."[10]

(2) Immortality to Remedy Existing Imperfections Incidental to Developing Life. To the vindication of God by the conception that the perfect future justifies the imperfect present, must be added the hope for immortality, since man, as Brown says, is conscious of capacities and ideals for which the brief span of the present life admits no satisfaction. "Still the sense of justice cries out for some adjustment of the inequalities which are so painfully manifest in the lot of man. Still the religious experience warrants hope that the communion which now exists between the soul and God is prophetic of larger fellowship to come. The enlarged view of the universe may serve to exalt, as well as to belittle, the significance of the being who is apparently its highest product. The self-forgetfulness and devotion engendered by modern social service render the lives of those who exemplify them not less but more worthy of continuance."[11] The goal of life then is not to be attained in this world if we can rightly hope for the continuance of our life into the next. Brown seems to do away with the difficulty of defects and failures in this world by his firm belief in the other-worldly goal of human life.

[10] Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, pp. 229 ff.

[11] Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 257.

"The theoretical argument," says he, "against the possibility of individual perfection has its psychological ground in the experience of incompleteness and limitation which is natural characteristic of a developing life. Experience shows that we gain one height only to find another still unscaled; and the best of men describe their life in terms of aspiration rather than of attainment. This sense of incompleteness is reënforced by a study of man's social nature. If it be true that there is no such thing as an isolated personality, but that man realizes his true self through his relations to his fellows, then the necessary condition for the production of the perfect individual would seem to be a perfect society, and to hope to see this within the limits of time compassed by a single life is manifestly out of question. . . . . Those who seem to us most advanced in the Christian life are most conscious of their own unworthiness and imperfection. Not here, they tell us, but in the better life which lies beyond, is the ideal to be realized. So the hope of individual perfection requires as its complement faith in immortality."[12]

It is not here then but in the unseen world for which this life is a training school, that we must look for the final realization of the Christian ideal.

The final realization of the ideal as justification of the divine wisdom as well as power must be looked at from the evolutionary point of view, as creation is not supposed to be a finished fact. Gradual growth of human personality extended over into the future life with progressive elimination of defects and imperfections is said to be the ordinary method of divine procedure. Since the almighty God, if he is to act at all, has to act in limited ways according to his moral and rational character, no calumny seems justified against his slow process. When the final consummation of the grand progressive movement comes about, defects and imperfections of the past will completely be swallowed up in the glory of triumph.

III. Solution of the Problem by Denying Omnipotence. (1) Immortality Uncertain. The argument for theodicy in relation to the problem of imperfection, as shown above, depends largely upon the hope of immortality. If, however, we insist on conclusions drawn from our actual life in this world rather than unprovable conditions in an assumed future life, the argument would present a different aspect. "The common argument for immortality," says John S. Mill, "rests upon the supposition that it is improbable that the goodness of God would ordain the annihilation of his noblest and richest work, after the greater part of its few years' life had been spent in the acquisition of faculties which time has not allowed him to turn to fruit."[13] But this supposition, he contends, has no positive guarantee from the facts of our empirical world. There is therefore no assurance whatever of a life after death.[14]

[12] Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 414 ff.

[13] Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 208.

[14] *Ibid.*, 209.

Modern psychology has made it clear that the physical and the psychical are but functional aspects of life and that they are mutually dependent. If this is so, death that destroys our physical basis of life would naturally involve the cessation of the psychical function.

If there is thus no assurance of personal immortality, as Mill insists, the realization of the ideal world may belong to later generations of the human race in its historic development, but certainly not to ourselves who are to die before the consummation is brought about. If we cannot perfect ourselves in our life time, our dissatisfaction cannot be cured by a simple optimistic outlook for our posterity, since our defects and imperfections would be inevitably ours. Supposing God to be our creator, perfect and omnipotent, how can we expect him to be tolerant of our imperfections that cannot be improved in our life time? If God cannot remove imperfections except through the race history of future, the imperfections of individuals in the past rightly constitute an indictment against his omnipotence. We must conclude, with McTaggart, that a perfectly good God would not have created the universe, if imperfections were thus unavoidable in his process of creation. If, then, he created an imperfect world in spite of its repugnance to his good will, he cannot be omnipotent.

(2) Miracles as Proof of Non-omnipotence. The older theologians such as Hodge, Shedd, and Smith, as we have seen in the Chapter II, assert miracles as a proof of the divine omnipotence in his providential government. God is said to have such a power of free action as to deviate from the ordinary course of natural laws and work wonders at his will. But on the other hand, the existence of miracles, if proven, is looked upon by some scholars as a very disproof of omnipotence. Mill finds miracles to be an obstacle to belief in the goodness of God, although they are usually supposed to prove the special benevolence as well as omnipotence of God. So he, discussing the significance of miracles in the ordinary theological sense, forcibly asserts that the very existence of miracle, if it does occur in God's providential government frustrates the idea of a perfect world and its omnipotent creator,[15] because there would be no need of miraculous intervention, if the world were created perfect by a perfect creator. Mill's contention is that the notion of providential government by an omnipotent Being for the good of his creatures must be entirely dismissed, since a Being who has produced a world machinery falling short of his intentions and requiring the occasional interposition of his hand, cannot himself be a perfect creator.[16]

[15] Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-240.
[16] *Ibid.*, 243.

(3) The Perfect cannot Produce the Imperfect. A creation less perfect than the creator, Höffding considers, is a discredit to the perfection of the creator himself. Christian theology, says he, offers an explanation of the origin of the world, "which seems as if it might involve the assumption of a shrinkage of value. For Creation is less than the Creator: it is finite and limited, and there is always the possibility of the fall which does not exist for the Creator in his eternal and ideal reality."[17] It is far easier to understand, as Höffding says, that the more perfect may have developed out of the less than that the imperfect should have had its origin in the perfect. If the perfect contain within itself the possibility or the seed of the imperfect, it is not perfect; while the imperfect may by completion or transformation develop in the direction of perfection.[18] James also contends that creatures cannot differ in quality from their creator, for the creation reflects the character of the creator.[19] Thus the imperfection of the universe must be attributed to the imperfection of its sole author.

(4) Imperfection as an Educative Device Disproves Omnipotence. Mill, furthermore, refutes the theory that God simply uses contrivance or means for educative purposes that men might learn God's perfect work through the traces of his creative process that are imperfect. "If it be said," Mill contends, "that an omnipotent Creator, though under no necessity of employing contrivances such as man must use, thought fit to do so in order to leave traces by which man might recognize his creative hand, the answer is that this equally supposes a limit to his omnipotence. For if it was his will that men should know that they themselves and the world are his work, he, being omnipotent, had only to will that they should be aware of it."[20] But if we say that God *had to* defer for educational purposes the doing of what is obviously good, the necessity of postponing one thing to another, Mill contends, belongs only to limited power.

"If the creator," he adds, "like a human ruler, had to adapt himself to a set of conditions which he did not make, it is as unphilosophical as presumptuous in us to call him to account for any imperfections in his work. We cannot judge what greater good would have had to be sacrificed, or what greater evil incurred, if he had decided to remove this particular blot. Not so if he be omnipotent. If he be that, he

[17] Höffding, *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 240.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 136 ff.
[19] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp. 193-194.
[20] Mill, *Op. cit.*, 178.

must himself have willed that the two desirable objects should be incompatible; he must himself have willed that the obstacle to his supposed design should be insuperable. It cannot therefore be his design. It will not do to say that it was, but that he had other designs which interfered with it; for no one purpose imposes necessary limitations on another in the case of a Being not restricted by conditions of possibility."[21]

The existence of imperfections then is not a purposive contrivance of the good God but they exist in spite of his will, for if he could, he would long since have eliminated them altogether. "The only admissible moral theory of creation," says Mill, "is that the principle of Good *cannot* at once and altogether subdue the powers of evil, either physical or moral; could not place mankind in a world free from the necessity of an incessant struggle with the maleficent powers, or make them always victorious in that struggle, but could and did make them capable of carrying on the fight with vigor and with progressively increasing success."[22] Such would be, says Mill, a faith which seems much better adapted for nerving man to exertion than a vague and inconsistent reliance on an Author of good who is supposed to be also the author of evil. "Many have derived," he continues, "a base confidence from imagining themselves to be favorites of an omnipotent but capricious and despotic Deity, but those who have been strengthened in goodness by replying on the sympathizing support of a powerful and good governor of the world, have, I am satisfied, never really believed that Governor to be, in the strict sense of the term, omnipotent. They have always saved his goodness at the expense of his power. They have believed that God's government was a system of adjustments and compromises; that the world is inevitably imperfect, contrary to his intention."[23] Mill's conclusion is that we must, in order to keep the divine benevolence intact, give up the idea of his omnipotence.

The problem of imperfection, however, involves the problem of physical and moral evils, as has been intimated, and so it will find its fuller explanation as we discuss the problem of evil and sin in the subsequent chapters.

[21] Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

CHAPTER V

The Problem of Physical Evil and Omnipotence

Problem

The problem of evil involves as we have seen the problem of imperfection and that of sin. But sin or moral evil, being the most serious problem in the affirmation of divine omnipotence, will receive treatment in the next chapter; here we confine ourselves to the question of physical evil as far as it is separable from the subsequent problem of moral evil. While the problem of evolution or imperfection is not considered so serious, almost every recent theologian clearly sees the difficulty of reconciling the existence of *evil* with the faith in the *good* almighty God. We can cite at random from any theological books, but here we give only a few typical presentations.

"How can the existence," asks Hodge, "of evil, physical and moral, be reconciled with the benevolence and holiness of a God infinite in his wisdom and power?"[1]

"The world is full of suffering," says Clarke, "and the amount of it is inconceivable. No one escapes it, can escape. Trouble is everywhere. There is physical pain, and there mental anguish, both in endless variety. The suffering is not distributed according to desert, for no attention appears to be paid to merit or demerit when it comes."

Clarke points out the fact that modern knowledge is extending far the scope of the problem.

"The race is far older," says he, "than we thought, and its earlier stages of life, so far as we can see, have been such as to intensify rather than relieve our perplexity. Moreover, it has always been known that our lower companions in life were sharers in our lot of suffering, the animal world being full of pain, with no moral ground so much as suggested for so great a fact. . . . If we say that God is watching over his world, he is watching a world so full of misery that we often think if we were in his place we would annihilate it, if we could not mitigate its agonies. How, we ask, can this be the world of that good God of whom Jesus spoke? In this indictment here may easily be one-sidedness and exaggeration, but all the world knows that behind it there is a dread array of facts."[2]

While Clarke asks concerning divine goodness, not raising the question of omnipotence, Johnson brings out another aspect of the problem.

"The problem of evil," says he, "owes its gravity almost wholly to the assertion of God's omnipotence . . . when some misfortune has befallen us, or our friends, or the community in which we live, when the long-drawn-out tragedies of wasting illness, of droughts and floods, of famine and forest fires have appalled us, when an earthquake has laid a great city in ruins, killing and maiming thousands of men, women, and children, and entailing wretchedness upon thousands more who have lost their all, we

[1] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 429.

[2] Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 433 ff.

have tried, perhaps, to meet the situation manfully. . . . But the question ultimately is: Is not the Omnipotent one also the author of nature? Did He not foresee these and all the other horrible things that would necessarily flow from it? And why did He not, if omnipotent, establish an order free from such dreadfulness?"[3]

In short, there would be no serious problem of evil, if God is not absolutely good, for he might then be fallible and make evil; neither would there be any problem if God is not omnipotent, for then he might be unable to eliminate evil at once. The real difficulty arises then, when we want to affirm both divine omnipotence and God's absolute goodness in the presence of physical evil which is due to the creator himself, if he be the sole author of the universe.

Possible Solutions of the Problem

I. Possible Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Absolute Omnipotence. 1. Denial of the Intrinsic Reality of Evil. Physical evil being felt as pain in the living organism, either bodily or mental, let us first consider evil in its pleasure and pain categories. The most obvious solution is to deny the intrinsic reality of pain in order to assert both divine omnipotence and goodness in the absolute sense. Bradley believes that pain as fact cannot be conjured away from the universe but pain can be so outbalanced by pleasure that it is practically swallowed up. "It is a common experience," says he, "that in mixed states pain may be neutralized by pleasure in such a way that the balance is decidedly pleasant. And hence it is possible that in the universe as a whole we may have a balance of pleasure, and in the total result no residue of pain."[4] "It is quite certain that small pains are often wholly swallowed up in a larger composite pleasure. If painfulness disappear in a higher unity, it will exist, but will have ceased to be pain when considered on the whole."[5] This is to say that pain exists in parts or as finite views, but it does not exist in the Absolute or viewed from the Absolute point.

2. The Dilemma Involved: Either Supreme Goodness or Absolute Omnipotence must be Denied. The view above mentioned, however, meets severe criticism at the hands of James[6] and McTaggart. They contend that even if it could be proved that pain is swallowed up in pleasure, the fact would still remain that we think it evil when we feel pain. Evil as *real* could be eliminated by an omnipotent God[7] if he is

[3] Johnson, *God in Evolution*, pp. 102-104.
[4] Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 157.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 198.
[6] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp. 116 ff.
[7] McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, pp. 208-210.

absolutely good. The conclusion is that we must either give up the absolute omnipotence or the supreme goodness of God in the presence of evil.

McTaggart offers a form of the first alternative which practically denies divine goodness by considering it as different in kind from ours. He likens God who permits evil in his universe to a father who should permit his son's leg to be broken and then decide for amputation as he is sure of its complete cure. McTaggart urges that if man did this we should call him wicked. Now, in what way, asks he, would the conduct of an omnipotent God, who permitted the existence of evil, differ from the conduct of such man, except that it is worse? Why is God called good, when his action is asserted to be such as would prove a man to be monster of wickedness? Mill declares that rather than worship such a God he would go to hell, if God has qualities which would be called wicked in man. We can affirm the absolute power of God only by giving up the conception of his supreme goodness, unless we make his goodness different from ours as Pascal and Mansel did.[8]

The other alternative is the attempt to save the goodness of God by giving up the reality of his omnipotence, while retaining the name. In this attempt, evil is made inevitable as a consequence of human free will, because free will implies free choice to do wrong. It is logically impossible to make the world of free agents free from evil. And omnipotence is so modified that it does not include ability to do the impossible. But McTaggartt contends that "a God who cannot create a universe in which all men have free will, and which is at the same time free from all evil, is not an omnipotent God, since there is one thing which he cannot do. . . Even if there were any ground for believing that the absence of evil from the universe would violate such laws as the law of Contradiction or of Excluded Middle, it is clear that a God who is bound by any laws is not omnipotent, since he cannot alter them."[9] McTaggart thus denies omnipotence in the absolute sense and advices us not to use the word if any modification is necessary, for then it implies, in his understanding, a limitation to the divine power. But theologians' definition of omnipotence is, as we have seen, quite different from his. They think that the divine power is not limited if God cannot do the self-contradictory or the impossible by the nature of things. And evil, they hold, is logically as well as practically inevitable by the nature of things in this evolving

[8] Pascal, *Works*, ed. Brunschvicg II, 348.

[9] McTaggart, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-217.

world. Let us then examine the various propositions offered as solutions of the problem by those who affirm a modified omnipotence.

II. Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Modified Omnipotence. 1. Evil as Consequence of Sin. A solution of the problem of evil generally held by traditional theology attributes the cause of evil to men the creatures, instead of God the creator. Charles Hodge and A. H. Strong, e.g., affirming a quasi absolute omnipotence by transcendentalizing God above human things, ascribe the cause of evil to men. Against Mill's fearful indictment of Nature,[10] her storms, earthquakes, decay and death, Strong asserts that Christianity regards these as due to man, not to God; as incidents of sin; as the groans of creation, crying out for relief and liberty. The imperfection of the world, he concludes, is due to sin. God made it with reference to the Fall,—the stage was arranged for the great drama of sin and redemption which was to be enacted thereon."[11] Curtis follows this traditional theology, as he takes death to be a result of depravity. "Death should be," says he, "to the Christian consciousness an abnormal event, a monstrous action of physical law against man, to express in every movement of its loathsome and appalling process God's boundless hatred of sin."[12] The corruption of the natural world is thus regarded as due to human sin and the existence of evil must be solely attributed to the Adamic race, no matter how this race be originated. God simply permits it for his retributive justice and lets men suffer the consequence of their sin.

This view, however, is not generally held today, because we are keenly conscious that such natural calamities as earthquakes, draughts, floods etc., are too superhuman to be ascribed to the consequence of our sin. So we pass to more adequate solutions.

2. Evil as Necessary to the Moral System. Harris, following the traditional theory, attributes the cause of evil largely to human misdemeanor.[13] Yet as he is conscious that some physical evils such as earthquakes and storms cannot be ascribed to human causation, he seeks to account for these by the very nature of moral system.

"Susceptibility," says he, "to privation of good, to suffering and sorrow is essential to the existence of a moral system consisting of finite persons under the government of God. It is essential to law that it be sanctioned by the punishment of transgressors. But a being not susceptible of suffering nor of the privation of good could not be punished for any transgression. God has so constituted the universe that a finite person

[10] Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 29.
[11] Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 402 ff.
[12] Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 205.
[13] Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, p. 230.

in it can realize good only in conformity with its fundamental law of love, and that a life of selfishness can issue only in the loss of all that is really good and in the suffering of evil. But such a constitution of the universe is possible only if finite persons exist capable of joy or sorrow, and so capable of experiencing good or evil."[14]

The very nature of a moral system thus requires evil as the contrast or correlate of good. God creating a moral system could not dispense with evil. This does not, Harris believes, impair the omnipotence of the creator. It is as absurd, says he, to suppose that God might create a person with a perfectly holy character, as to suppose his creating one a hundred years old. An omnipotent God in the modified sense need not be able to do what is impossible in the nature of things.

3. Evil as a Means of Moral Education. This theory is a variation of the preceding one. It is different in the sense that the disciplinary aspect of evil as *necessity* for chastisement dominates in the foregoing conception of moral system, while the educational theory lays more emphasis on the positive use of evils, physical and mental, as *means* for the training of character. "In the life of moral beings," says Clarke, "physical evil is not useless. As spirits could not live an embodied life without pain, so probably they could not be trained in character without hardship and suffering."[15] "Of the evil in the world," says Brown, "it is true that it is used by God to promote the Christian end. However difficult it may be to account for its presence, the fact remains that now that it is here, it is overruled for good. Through contact with suffering and sin, man learns lessons of inestimable value to himself; struggling to overcome them, he not only grows in character himself, but he comes to understand more clearly the character of God."[16] Supporting the educational theory Brown says further that through suffering man learns lessons of the highest importance for his welfare and training. "The educational significance of pain is one of the lessons most clearly taught by modern science. Psychology shows us that the capacity for pain enters into the very structure of consciousness, and is an indispensable element in our equipment for life. By the law of contrast it makes possible our highest pleasures. Through it we become conscious of our need, and are warned of the approach of danger. The higher the development, the greater the capacity, and the more important the function of pain."[17] The educational theory shows that pain is as necessary for the development of the animal as for that of man but with the

[14] Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 223 ff.
[15] Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 154.
[16] Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 204.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

advent of man the problem enters upon a new stage. To the suffering of the body being added the suffering of the mind, pain now becomes a means of moral as well as physical training. God is justified in using physical and mental evil for the training of moral life because man cannot develop a vigorous character except through hardship and suffering. It is not for retribution but for the betterment of humanity that God uses evil as means. Thus it may be held that God is good as well as omnipotent in the modified sense, since God cannot find a better means for man's spiritual good than the occasional experience of evil.

4. Evil as Incidental to Life Process. The final and most plausible theory combines the results of all foregoing considerations in a larger outlook on life, and announces, though hesitatingly, that physical evils are unavoidable or incidental to life in evolution. Clarke in his later work, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, recognizing the blackness of evil in a stronger light, says that suffering is no intruder in the world; it belongs to the system that we are proposing to attribute to the good God. All observation shows that it is the nature of the world to contain both pain and pleasure. Animals live together; and while their association doubtless enhances their pleasure, it also offers boundless opportunity for producing pain. Consequently, in the living world below man physical enjoyment and suffering have always existed together. Which has been the greater no one can know. When we come to the human race the conditions are the same, except that here there are more ways for pleasure and pain to enter. Here nerves are more sensitive, bringing pleasure and pain more exquisite. Here injury is easy and certain. But here, besides, suffering is mental as well as physical. Man thinks, loves, hates. He loves and loses, and the nobler the love the sorer the bereavement. He hates, too, and hatred is bitter, and anger is painful. So for men as well as for animals it appears that the system of life is one in which pleasure and pain are blended. Neither of the two has been brought in from without. The order of the existing world produces both, and if this is a good God's world, then both exist in the world of a good God. Abnormal doings of men destroy the normal balance of the two, and give sad increase to the pain as truly as pleasure enters into the scheme of human life. If suffering is in the scheme of life, it must have some significance in the system. Suffering is educative, and stands forth as a teacher for whose instruction there is no substitute. It is doubtful, says Clarke, whether, without the discipline of pain, any part of the animal world could have advanced to the possibility of man. "When we come to human life, how many out of a deep heart have sung the praise of sorrow

as a wise teacher of the soul! In the light of experience we may fairly claim a place for pain by the side of pleasure in the system of a good God who is training life toward perfection."[18]

The same theory is expounded by James Ward more from the aspect of evolution. Men are regarded to be co-workers with God. As we shall see later, Ward's position entirely approximates that of Johnson and McTaggart who deny omnipotence for a similar reason; but Ward holds the conception of modified omnipotence similar to that of the theologians whose theories we have just considered.

"Setting out from where we are, from the standpoint of the Many," says Ward, "we have no ground for assuming a Creator who does everything but only a Creator whose creatures create in turn. The real world must be the joint result of God and man, unless we are to deny the reality of that in us which leads us to the idea of God at all. . . . Then where the Many have some initiative—where development is epigenetic—contingency and conflict, fallibility and peccability seem inevitable."[19] Ward is confronted here with the old objection that if God is absolutely omnipotent, there should be nothing inevitable which he cannot remove. Ward, however, does not take omnipotence to be of such an absolute character, for he holds that God to act must emerge from absolute indeterminateness, and then he could only do what is possible; though what is possible would be determined, of course, entirely by what God is. To proclaim creation, says Ward, restricted by determinate possibilities to be an idea derogatory to the sovereign majesty of God is but blind adulation, for it really amounts to denying that God is himself a definite being at all, and is either intellectually or morally consistent.

"Even if there be a God," says Ward, "he certainly has not made the world what it is to be, but has rather endowed it with talents to enable it to work out its own perfection in conjunction with himself. This working out is what we call experience, and experience can never presuppose the knowledge or the skill that is only gained by means of it. Where several possibilities are open a creature acting on its own initiative can only find out the right one by way of trial and often of error. Such error we may say is an evil; but we cannot straightway call it a superfluous, still less an absolute evil, if it is an inevitable incident of experience as such, and if in general the experience is worth what it costs."[20]

But still there are those other physical evils, such as storms, floods, pestilence, and earthquake, that can hardly be regarded as the direct consequence of incipient and imperfect experience. Can it be said that these are not absolute nor superfluous evils? In attempting to deal with this question Ward recalls another character of the world's evolution.

[18] Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 442-445. See also, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 153 ff.

[19] Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 356.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 359 ff.

The life and progress of society, all its spontaneity, initiative and individuality, would be ineffective without its conservative elements of stability—habit, custom, law, and the like. Just as friction which renders locomotion possible is also a retarding force, we cannot have one without the other. The disadvantages then are neither absolute evils nor in general superfluous evils.[21] Ward holds that the idea of a world the parts of which are in no way to limit each other is as unthinkable as the idea of an absolutely omnipotent God who is to create it. "To object that God himself can only be finite, and must be limited from without, because he cannot override eternal truths, is the merest sophistry. The demand for absoluteness of this sort is a demand not for God but for the Indeterminate, a supreme unity of opposites which is the same as nothing."[22] The point is that our world is a world of many who are created with a certain amount of initiative. Their interaction produces mutual check as well as impetus. It involves destruction, disease, waste, and suffering. Thus understood, physical evils are contingently present as an incident to progress.

5. Summary. The position of the advocate of modified omnipotence with reference to the problem of evil may be summarized in a few words: Evil is necessary or unavoidable to the moral system. Life expresses itself in pleasure and pain, good and evil categories; one would be impossible without its correlate. Evil is incidental to the evolving world, though some theologians hope for the final elimination of all evil when the creative task of God is consummated. Life is meaningless without its task of conquering evil. God had to create life with its incidental evils or else give up his creation of life altogether. Since the rational God could not do the self-contradictory, he could not create life without suffering; for suffering is a logical implication of living organism. The existence of evil, then, cannot be reflection on God's omnipotence, since it is not limitation from outside but belongs to the very nature of things which he has created.

It should be noted, however, that this same theory is used by those who deny omnipotence. Johnson and McTaggart, e.g., interpret this very fact as the sign of non-omnipotence because the imperfect nature of created existence reflects the limitations under which the creator carried out his work. We pass, then, to

III. Solutions of the Problem by Denying Omnipotence. There are in the main two theories, one of which denies omnipotence because of

[21] Ward, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-360.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 439 ff.

God's internal limitations, while the other introduces a secondary power which externally limits the free exercise of the divine power. The former is represented by Johnson, the latter by the author of *Evil and Evolution*. Mill and McTaggart belong to both as they see limitations of the divine power both externally and internally, although they do not introduce the rival power of evil. Omitting Mill's and McTaggart's account we will confine ourselves to the typical arguments given by Johnson and by the author of *Evil and Evolution*.

1. Internal Limitation Theory. Johnson mildly affirming the incidental character of evil as a limitation in the nature of things, expounds his hypothesis, as already mentioned, that the good God may have had to choose the least of two evils, namely, either a world without life, or a world with life and its incidental evil. Johnson undertakes to show that God, being limited in power, could not have chosen a better alternative than the present world with life and incidental evil.

"All the exuberant life," says he, "and joyfulness of the animated world have come into being not in *spite* of the adverse influences and obstacles that every species has to encounter, but directly *because* of those conditions. The difficulty of finding food, the alertness and activity that are required every day in the avoidance or thwarting of hostile influences, the battles that have to be fought, and the sharpening of its wits in consequence—all these are the very cause and sourse of the exuberant happiness that characterizes nature through its length and breadth."[23]

Johnson's contention is that the struggle for existence is the very condition of progress, but God who could not have in his choice a better method than this evolutionary process which necessarily involves incidental evil cannot properly be regarded as omnipotent. In contrast with Mill's pessimistic accusation,[24] Johnson takes a melioristic attitude toward the existing evil, but his conclusion as we have seen in a previous chapter (Evolution), is this, that God who has an evolutionary task, though ultimately victorious, of eliminating evil, should not be called almighty but simply greatly powerful.

When we compare this view with the argument of Ward presented previously (II. 4 above), we note that both writers bring foreward the same conception, making evil incidental to life, but that Ward affirms omnipotence while Johnson denies it exactly for the same reasons. The question of omnipotence or non-omnipotence then becomes merely a verbal one, since the content is the same while different in labelling.

2. External Limitation Theory. We now consider another interesting theory of non-omnipotence by the author of *Evil and Evolution*.

[23] Johnson, *God in Evolution*, pp. 104 ff.

[24] Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, pp. 28-37.

The solution here offered is a dualistic one: God is inherently able to do anything whatever, even to remake the law of contradiction when it involves evil to life. So the world in the process of evolution would have no incidental evils but for the intrusion of the devil into the workshop of God, causing maladjustments which God is now amending with incessant effort. Repudiating all the theories offered in favor of affirming modified omnipotence, the author's intention is to show that God is not internally but externally limited. Let us follow his contention, first taking up his refutation of other theories and then his hypothesis of Devil.

(A) Refutation of Other Theories Explaining the Existence of Evil. (1) Evil as Due to Free Will. The first victim is the human causation theory which holds that evil is a consequence or corollary to man's free will. We have seen it held by Strong and shall see it again in the next chapter when Hodge discusses the problem of sin. This theory as we have observed is generallly given up by recent theologians. Such evils as floods, storms, earthquakes, pestilences, are not traceable to any exercise of men's free will, and only remotely, says the author, can they be said to exercise any influence *on* free will.[25]

(2) Evil as Educational. The educational theory also is not asserted in its full strength by recent theologians such as Clarke and Sheldon, as they are conscious of its weaknesses; Brown asserts it frankly yet not without hesitation. Here we meet a strenuous opposition by the author of *Evil and Evolution*. He admits that calamity and suffering have their instructive uses, but it is just as rational to believe that these things do frequently tend in exactly the opposite direction.[26] Mill contends that both good and evil tend to fructify, good producing more good and evil more evil. Health, strength, wealth, knowledge, virtue facilitate the acquisition of more good. Bodily illness renders the body more susceptible of disease; it produces incapacity of exertion, sometimes debility of mind. Poverty is the parent of a thousand mental and moral evils. What is still worse, to be injured or oppressed, when habituated, lowers the whole tone of the character. All bad qualities are strengthened by habit, and all vices and follies tend to spread. Mill's contention[27] is that evil is sometimes educative toward the production of good but more often it is a sheer destructive force which cannot be compensated by the good it effects.

[25] *Evil and Evolution*, pp. 14-18.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.
[27] Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-37.

"Take any great catastrophe of history," says the author of *Evil and Evolution*, "the Lisbon earthquake for instance. In about eight minutes fifty thousand people were crushed to death, or swallowed up alive or devoured by the inrushing sea. Who will venture to maintain that the world has derived from that awful event any moral or spiritual lesson at all in proportion to its magnitude? . . . Such display of power, so far from educating or ennobling the world, may tend only to make men, in their hearts, cringe and cower like slaves under the heel of a despot. . . . The educational theory of evil by itself will not do. Life with its trials and troubles undoubtedly is an education. . . . But depend upon it, these educational successes are brands plucked from the burning. They are but a mere salvage from the wreck. To say the least, they are largely counterbalanced by failures. This life was never planned and evil was never 'permitted' for the sake of them."[28]

The author then takes up the question of immortality and the idea of this life as preparation for the next, since we are often told that the purpose of this life is our training for eternity. How can it be, asks he, that an educational course of a mere twenty years, fifty years, seventy years, could ever have been deliberately arranged for with a view to its effect for all eternity? Life is a mere flash in the pan, a tick of the clock, a bubble on the stream. What would you think of the wisdom of the father who sent his child to school for half a day to get an education that should equip him for life? Yet that father's idea would be wisdom itself compared with the folly of making a miserable three score years and ten a schooling time for all eternity. Besides, the author urges, if souls cannot be trained without evil, there would be no end of evil, since growth is the very law of life. If this life is to have any hereafter there must be further progress and development. Character must advance in power and worth, free will must have greater freedom, and goodness must shine purer and brighter. But how can that all be if God himself cannot train character without suffering? The truth is, says the author, that God can do it, and he does do it. To illustrate:

"If you watch a troop of healthy boys at play," says the author, "every breath they draw is an exultation; every muscular movement is a delight; every struggle is intoxication; mentally, morally, physically, the lads are developing not only without pain, but with positive rapture of enjoyment, and broadly speaking, that, as far as we can see, appears to be the creator's method throughout the whole realm of animal and spiritual life, wherever that life is healthy and conditions normal. . . . In all the higher ranges of human faculty, who are the people who develop most rapidly and most fully? Is it they who are impelled by pain? Emphatically not. . . . Taking the whole world over, pleasure is a greater promoter of human development than pain—infinitely greater. Pain, no doubt, has played a stupendous part in the world's evolution, but an infinitely greater part has been played by the lusty vigor of animal life, the insatiable keenness of intellect, the love of kith and kin, the placid enjoyment of home, the absorbing delight in congenial work, the exultation of achievement, and the approbation of those around."[29]

[28] *Evil and Evolution*, pp. 28-31.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

With this eloquent literary appeal the author concludes that sorrow and suffering are unnecesary as educative means; that if God cannot develop character without use of evil he cannot be omnipotent; that in reality there are many instances in which he can do and is doing it without the instrumentality of evil. Evil then is not necessarily the condition of life process; but it may be externally an intruder into the universe of a good God.

(3) Evolutionary Theory of Evil. The author then takes up the evolutionary explanation of evil which is not essentially different from the educational theory, although the outlook is wider as it includes the whole domain of nature and life. The theory of evil as incidental to life in its development is held as we have seen by Clarke and Ward who affirm onnipotence, and also by Johnson who denies it. Why, the author inquires, must the grand scheme of things move on upward through a protracted series of evolutions characterized by all that is tragic and fearful, instead of unfolding like a rose under June sunbeams? Why does not a railway or a factory work with perfect smoothness and efficiency from the outset? Of course it is because those directors and employees are deficient in knowledge, experience and skill. Suppose that it is quite within the manager's power to make his system so complete and well organized that no accident can ever happen. Will he then be justified in leaving some flaws that lead to accidents? The manager may say, "Yes, I knew there were faults, and I saw they would probably lead to accidents. But in the long run it is better that there should be some liability to accident. It tends to promote good order among passengers, and it develops vigilance and care, skill and devotion among the staff." But can you conceive, asks the author, of a perfectly good and human manager who sees faults in his arrangements, who has it in his power to remedy them and to avert all accident, and who also has it in his power to ensure all the characteristics he desires in passengers and staff without accidents but, who, nevertheless, prefers to carry out his ideas by malajustments? You cannot conceive of such a railway manager; but that is just your conception of the Creator if you think of him as a Being who foresaw the dire anguish of such a world as this and deliberately planned it.[30] Supposing growth to be the law of life everywhere, it is inconceivable, says the author, to have ages upon ages of dreadful strife, of frightful suffering, of ruinous destruction, and then back to the perfect adjustment which might have been planned and secured from the earliest dawn of life!

[30] *Evil and Evolution*, pp. 37-42.

The evolutionary theory in explaining evil supposes that God has certain wise purposes to attain and He cannot, though omnipotent, attain them without permitting some evil.

"Imagine, however," says the author, "only some slight and insignificant infusion of evil, but the Creator's own laws of life and progress and heredity will go on expanding and developing it to the unutterable misery of unborn myriads, and as time runs on, the most hideous diseases, the fiercest passions, the most deadly strife, the most revolting cruelties—every phase and form of evil that have racked and tormented the world lie out before that prescient gaze. . . . We find it incredible that a Being capable of contriving a universe so full of perfection as we see this to be should be incapable of avoiding these flaws and faults in the original work of creation, or at all events of correcting them when the effects of them first become apparent. If there is but one power in the universe, the riddle presented by the facts of the world around us is wholly insoluble. But if there is a second power, and that power sufficient to disturb the divinity-intended order of things, then the case becomes comparatively intelligible."[31]

The point is that God who could create such a stupendous structure as the universe with its beauty of many perfections and harmonies, should have been able to foresee any maladjustment which might happen in the course of evolution and to provide its remedy for them before they really take place as evil. The fact that this is not the case speaks loud for the hypothesis of introducing the Satanic power for the explanation.

The author then sums up his contention by skilfuly refuting all sorts of instrumentary theory of suffering and declares conclusively that evil is unnecessary for the growth of life. It is a total fallacy, says he, to suppose that suffering is the only way by which human development can be brought about. In ten thousand ways the Creator is doing it by the very reverse of this all around us, and if there is really any hope of happy existence hereafter, that very hope refutes the supposition that such griefs and afflictions as have to be endured in this world are really essential to sound and healthy development of human nature.

Here, for instance, is a mother who has lost a child. The suffering mother may undergo a spiritualization, a softening. "She may be purer, stronger, and better for her suffering, but that is not because of the suffering, but because of a new consciousness of sympathy given and received. Suffering itself is evil, and nothing but evil. It depresses and discourages; it weakens and destroys. People suffer and they degenerate just as naturally and inevitably as plants degenerate in cold, gloom, and ungenial conditions. Primarily that is the universal tendency. It is only when the broken spirit, in its distress, becomes conscious that it is breathing in an atmosphere of sympathy, that the great heart of the universe is throbbing in suffering with it, that in spite of everything it begins to rise and exult even in affliction. It is just here—not in suffering but in sympathy—lies the heart of the great mystery of evil in its power to benefit."[32]

[31] *Op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56.

Evil can be utilized, but without evil, the author maintains, life would have developed far better. In fact, the thing that develops life is not evil but good, not sorrow but sympathy. And the existence of evil in this world inevitably constitutes an indictment against the omnipotence of the creator God.

(B) Satanic Solution. Thus rejecting all theories which tend to justify God in the presence of evil by including it as necessary or inevitable in the system he created, the author of *Evil and Evolution* urges that if you admit the creatorship and the beneficence of a God there is no reason why you may not admit the possibility of existence of the power and the malevolence of a devil. The author maintains that the maladjustments in the scheme of creation are due to the agency of Satan, and are in no way to be ascribed either to the indifference or to the deliberate purpose of the Creator. "It seems," says he, "just as reasonable to regard the phenomena of creation as the outcome of conflicting principles embodied in two personalities, and such a view of things leaves mankind free to regard one as wholly good and the other wholly bad."[33]

Having established his hypothesis of Satanic invasion, the author meets difficulties arising in connection with his assertion that God could avoid any maladjustments, unless disturbed by a foreign power. The difficulties are finally reduced to one point, namely, Could God avoid evils which seem to be the very implication of life itself in which pleasure involves its correlative pain, good its evil, and vice versa? The author affirms that it is possible; he explains away the difficulty with two main arguments. The first of them is that the God's exception to law points to His ability to avoid any evil. The author seeks its proofs in the laws of nature and their working. Particles of matter, for instance, attract each other; that is the law of gravitation. But if this law were absolutely universal in its operation, the particles of which gases are composed would be drawn together, and the air we breathe would be a physical impossibility.[34] Gravitation does indeed still retain its hold upon them, or they would fly off into space altogether. But within certain limits they appear to move in any direction. Here you would have the central law of universe not "ceasing" but submissively giving way to another law.[35] The law of contraction by cold, if applied universally, would cause tremendous disaster, but by the time the water

[33] *Op. cit.*, p. 65.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 78 ff.

has become ice it has become specifically lighter and floats on the top, thus preventing the solidification of the water, and protecting from the the extremity of winter cold the animal and vegetable life below. Again, if the change from the fluid to the solid or from the solid to the fluid came about with the mere raising or dropping of the temperature a little above or below 32 degrees, tremendous volumes of water would be almost instantaneously solidified into ice, and the ice might presently be reconverted into water. The consequences would often be ruinous in the extreme. But the law of latent heat comes into operation and the cataclysms that would result from the instantaneous melting of millions upon millions of tons of snow upon uplands and mountains are entirely averted.[36] Nature, says the author, everywhere shows overwhelming evidence of having been designed for the good of all living things, and the natural thing would be for the law of Nature to protect man from injury. The author's contention is that we do not want miracles to counteract the inexorable laws of Nature but secondary laws to be provided for avoiding atrocious injury of life through the rigidity of the primary laws. If God could make abundant exceptions in the laws of Nature, even in the law of gravitation, why could He not make more exceptions to the primary laws with secondary ones on every occasion whenever the primary laws are liable to do injury to life? The inconsistency of the divine providence on this point cannot be explained, the author holds, except by introducing the disturbing element from outside, namely, a devil.

The other point of his contention is that a perfect world is possible with a kind of suffering which does not amount to evil as atrocious as we know of. Urging the probability that the work of Creator would have been perfect, the author does not say that a world perfect as it evolves from the hand of the Creator need not be, and could not be, a world entirely void of all possibility of suffering. But he contends that, compared with what we see now, it would have been infinitesimal, and that Nature herself would have operated remedially. To illustrate, there are some very marvelous ways in which Nature gives us warning of danger. If she wishes to preserve you from blood-poisoning by foul air, she endows you with a keen sense of smell. If Nature wishes to guard you from the danger of falling over a precipice, she gives you an inexplicable dread of the brink of a precipice. Again, Nature seems to have contemplated the repair of physical injury to the body: it is difficult to conceive that the loss of a limb might ever have been repaired,

[36] *Op. cit.*, pp. 75 ff.

but there are facts of the animal world which suggest that even this need not be absolutely inconceivable. There is one species of crab that, if chased by an enemy, will throw off a limb, apparently for the purpose of diverting the attention of the pursuer, and will afterwards grow another limb. Why might the higher organism not have been endowed with a power possessed by the lower? Such facts of Nature show that God could provide with natural remedy for unnecessary suffering or injury to life, but the fact that there are irremediable evils in the existing world calls for some other way of explanation. The fact then, the author asserts, must be attributed not to the supremely benevolent God but to a Satanic, diabolical power which is the cause of all this trouble. And if the hypothesis of this alien power is more acceptable, the idea of divine omnipotence of course must be given up.

Summary

The existence of evils such as natural disasters and calamities caused by earthquake, flood, drought, etc., not to mention epidemic and pestilence, makes it hard for us to believe in an omnipotent God as watching over us; but an omnipotent God would not necessarily eliminate evils if they were not repugnant to Him; in that case we cannot hold God to be supremely benevolent. And yet if God were not benevolent, He would cease to be God. So we must conceive of God as supremely good. Why then in this world of a supremely good God does evil exist if He is also omnipotent? This is the problem. We have given solutions in three main sections as follows:

(1) Solution by affirming absolute omnipotence. In order to assert an absolute omnipotence and benevolence, there is no other way than to ignore the intrinsic reality of evils. But if the existence of evil is proved real, omnipotence cannot be asserted in the absolute sense, since the absolutely powerful God must be able to eliminate any evil at once, if it is repugnant to his benevolence.

(2) Solution by affirming modified omnipotence. Accordingly, current theology does not suppose the divine omnipotence to be so absolute that God can do anything whatever. God acts in limited ways according to his moral and rational nature. God can use, it is said, evils as instruments either for retributive, reformatory, disciplinary or educational purposes. This is an ethical use of evils. Again, a moral system requires suffering and sorrow; God cannot dispense with evil because it is implicit in the very nature of moral existence. Nor is it logical, they say, to eliminate pain while permitting pleasure, to dispense

with sorrow while blessing with joy, since the existence of one is corollary to the other. Life involves a distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, and choice of one or the other, or else life would be a blank paper. God who could not avoid what is incidental to life should not be charged against his omnipotence, because omnipotence, *ex hypothesi*, does not mean ability to do the impossible. Such is the main contention of those who affirm modified omnipotence.

(3) Solution by denying omnipotence. The same "incidental" theory, however, which is used for the defense of omnipotence is here made to defeat God's almightiness by some of those who deny the divine omnipotence. The very fact, they say, that God as absolute creator has made life which involves its evils such as sorrow and suffering, disease and death, shows that His power is limited by His own nature which cannot be so perfect as it is supposed, since it is imperfectly and defectively manifested in his creative work. Another solution of the problem is advanced by a skilful writer, saying that God might have been able to foresee and eliminate all evils and maladjustments but for the intrusion of a foreign power which has disturbed the omnipotent rule of the beneficient God.

CHAPTER VI

The Problem of Moral Evil and Omnipotence

Problem

The problem of evil owes its gravity to the non-human origin of a great many physical ills, while the problem of sin is generally easily disposed of by theologians, since sin is thought to be due to human free will and God is not responsible for it. But, nevertheless, why is God not indirectly responsible for sin, since He gave men the freedom which led them to sin? This problem cannot be fully comprehended until we discuss the problem of freedom in the next chapter. Here we wish to show that the problem of sin gives us a sharper sense of suffering than physical evil, and hence intensifies the problem discussed in the preceding chapter.

How, asks Hodge, can the existence of physical and moral evil be reconciled with the benevolence and holiness of a God infinite in his wisdom and power? Even if pain could be removed from the category of evil, sin is not so easily disposed of. "The world lies in wickedness. The history of man is, to a large degree, the history of sin. If God be holy, wise, and omnipotent, how can we account for this widely extended and long-continued prevalence of sin?"[1] Clarke in his later work presents the problem in an excellent way.

"The world," says he, "is a world of sin. The world, which has no existence apart from God, abounds in opposition to his character and will. That which he hates is done by beings for whose existence he alone is responsible. Instead of the good and harmonious world that would correspond to his holy love and power, we behold a world in which good and evil exist in perpetual struggle. . . . However it may have come to pass, evil gets possession of beings whom God created for himself and only a minor part of them does he appear to us to be getting back. When we turn from individuals to the course of history, we find that the human career shows a long history of right and wrong, wrong often seeming stronger than right, sin persisting, and evil rising in new forms after defeat. Evil seems far easier than good to perpetrate and increase. The scene is all unlike what we should expect if the one good God were God alone. . . . The better God claimed to be, the deeper becomes the mystery of evil in his world. Can we believe in him in the face of this? And if we think of men as destined to live beyond the present life, and going from this world to some other with their evil in them, the field of the problem is at once indefinitely enlarged. Out into the unexplored spiritual realm it extends, where it seems to have possession of all the future. . . . We may perhaps be under a nightmare of facts that we do not rightly understand. But if so, we still beg to be told why God made such a nightmare

[1] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 430.

possible, and in any case we cannot deny the seriousness of the problem. The fact of evil has darkened the heaven of God for ages; the cloud is still there."[2]

This problem concerning sin in relation to omnipotence is seriously recognized by most theologians and it is quite unnecessary to reiterate their propositions. First we may ask: is sin a real evil? If it is an illusion due to a finite view of life, is the existence of such an illusion not derogatory to the divine goodness or power? On the other hand, if sin is a real evil, how can we explain its presence in the world of a good God? The point at issue is this, whether sin is inevitable in a moral system of free persons. If not, a supremely good and omnipotent God ought to eliminate sin at once because it is contrary to his moral perfection. But if sin is inevitable, may God be regarded as an omnipotent Being in the modified sense which precludes the ability to do the impossible? Or is the inevitableness of sin in the moral world to be taken as God's own limitation in power, if we do not wish to include moral evil in the divine nature?

Possible Solutions of the Problem

I. Possible Solution of the Problem by Affirming Absolute Omnipotence. As we have observed in case of physical evil, there is no other way than to deny the reality of sin as evil if we assert the absolute omnipotence and supreme goodness of God. Since absolute idealism is inclined to deny the reality of moral evil from the view point of the whole, we will again cite Royce and Bradley, prominent representatives of current absolutism. They do not of course ignore the reality of moral evil in practical life, but tend to deny it from the point of view of the totality of reality. Sin is not ignorance, says Royce, but a moral delinquency, a wilful forgetting of duty, and as such sin is a real evil in the finite life.[3] But evil is a finite, imperfect reality, that is, not true reality. As an evil, sin cannot exist in isolation. "Its supplement appears in the form of deeds of atonement, reparation, control, condemnation, and in the end, fulfilment."[4] All finite life, Royce maintains, is a struggle with evil, yet from the final point of view the Whole is good. "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Yet in just our life, viewed in its entirety, the glory of God is completely perfect."[5]

Bradley goes more thoroughly into absolutistic tenets and says, "We suffer within ourselves a contest of the good and bad wills and a certainty of evil. . . . This discord is necessary, since without it morality must

[2] Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 434 ff.
[3] Royce, *The World and the Individual*, II, 359.
[4] *Ibid.*, II, 371.
[5] *Ibid.*, II, 379.

wholly perish. . . . Moral evil exists only in moral experience, and that experience in its essence is full of inconsistency. For morality desires unconsciously, with the suppression of evil, to become wholly non-moral."[6] The perfect Being, our moral Ideal, is a non-moral or supermoral Being, as Bradley says that morality itself labors essentially to pass into a supermoral and therefore a non-moral sphere; yet he maintains that his Absolute is full of moral distinctions richer than ours.[7] But how is that mystery, the same as Royce's, possible? We finite beings must simply confess our ignorance. At all events, if we could deny the reality of moral evil in the absolutist hypothesis as it apparently tends to ignore it from the view point of the Whole, the reality of sin as illusion of a finite view cannot be conjured away. And if God is perfectly good and omnipotent, he must be able to eliminate, as James and McTaggart insist,[8] even such an illusion or one-sided view. So we cannot assert divine omnipotence in the absolute sense. But as we have seen that modern theologians do not assert absolute omnipotence, let us show their explanation of the existence of sin on their hypothesis of modified omnipotence.

II. Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Modified Omnipotence. Since sin is a reality, at least a moral reality, the definition of its nature has intimate connection with the solution of the problem before us. We therefore must refer to a typical conception of sin as stated by theologians. Theologians generally find the essential principle of sin in selfishness.[9] Sin, says Clarke, is the placing of self-will or selfishness above the claim of love and duty,[10] and in its relation to the moral government of God, it is "assertion and choice of what is diametrically opposed to the character and will of God."[11] With this conception of sin as the selfishness of the creature which opposes him to the character of God, let us proceed to a discussion of the solutions of the problem.

1. Solution of the Problem by Affirming a Quasi Absolute Omnipotence. Those who affirm quasi absolute omnipotence consider that sin is permitted by God and embraced in the divine plan of redemption.

The Scripture teaches, says Hodge, that "the glory of God is the end to which the promotion of holiness, and the production of happiness, and all other ends are subordinate. Therefore, the self-manifestation of God, the revelation of his infinite

[6] Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 201 ff.
[7] *Ibid.*, 204.
[8] *Vide* Chpt. IV.
[9] Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 567, Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 194.
[10] Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 235.
[11] *Ibid.*, 237.

perfection, being the highest conceivable, or possible good, is the ultimate end of all his works in creation, providence, and redemption. As sentient creatures are necessary for the manifestation of God's benevolence, so there could be no manifestation of his mercy without misery, or of his grace and justice, if there were no sin."[12]

Thus man is a mere means for the glory of the divine perfection, and his sin is also to contribute its quota to the glory of God through the divine plan of redemption. But can we escape the objection that it is inconsistent with the holiness of God that He should foreordain or permit sin for his own glory? Shedd contends that the permissive decree of sin should not be confounded with the authorship of sin. We cannot infer, says he, that because it is the duty of a man to keep his fellow man from sinning, if he can, it is also the duty of God to keep man from sinning. "The criminal cannot say that 'you are to blame for this crime, because you did not prevent me from perpetrating it.' Non-prevention of crime is not the authorship of crime."[13] The analogy is well taken, but when a man had actual power to prevent the crime of another and yet did not do it, he can of course escape the charge of the "authorship" of the crime, but a moral responsibility for not preventing the evil which was in his power to avert, he can not escape. The same would be far more true in the case of God who is supposed to be the absolute author of all things. Yet God is not regarded as responsible for the non-prevention or permission of sin. "We maintain," says Strong, "that God does decree sin in the sense of embracing in his plan the foreseen transgressions of men, while at the same time we maintain that these foreseen transgressions are chargeable wholly to men and not at all to God."[14]

Sin is thus embraced in the divine decree, but God is not the direct author of sin. The free choice of man called sin into existence, but freedom alone cannot explain it; for if it could, it would defeat the divine omnipotence by acting differently from the eternal decree in case that the divine plan had not embraced sin. God foreknew man's sin and the fall as it was planned in the cosmic Drama of Redemption. God can be called an indirect author of sin, although man is directly and supposed to be *solely* responsible for the fact. Hence the penalty inflicted upon the misconduct of man is not reformatory but retributive, supposed to do more justice to the divine glory.[15] Besides, wicked sinners are

[12] Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, 435.

[13] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, 410.

[14] Strong, *op. cit.*, 354.

[15] See the purpose of divine penalty in Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol I, 417, and Strong *op. cit.*, 653.

consigned to endless punishment and not to annihilation which would rather be a blessing, say they, compared with eternal hell fire.[16] And this also is said to contribute something more to the divine glory, the purpose of creation. God made the plan; man through the exercise of his gift (freedom) fell; God sends him a saviour, or dooms him to hell. This solution may perhaps be sufficient to establish the divine omnipotence in the quasi absolute sense, if it can assure us that God had many other ways to glorify himself than to let men be free to sin and save them afterwards yet He chose this. But this assertion of omnipotence is far from safeguarding the divine benevolence which is also to be supreme. If, however, we say that God had no other way to glorify himself than to create men with freedom and let them sin in order to save them afterwards, can we still call him almighty even in the quasi absolute sense? Here is the dilemma: the more power to God, the less benevolence, since God then becomes the more responsible for sin. An attempt to escape from this dilemma we shall see in the following solutions.

2. Solutions by Affirming a More Modified Omnipotence. Since the so-called Scriptural solution is felt to be unsatisfactory and repugnant to our moral sense, more recent theologians seek different solutions. There are roughly speaking three different theories offered by those who affirm the "deterministic" and the "creative" omnipotence, namely, (1) the moral system or freedom theory, represented by Harris and and Sheldon, (2) the educational theory, by Brown, (3) the evolutionary or incidental theory, by Clarke and Ward, which combines the above two besides other elements.

(1) Moral System or Freedom Theory. This theory attributes the origin of sin to human freedom or free choice of the will.[17] Sin is not in the divine plan as an actuality, nor is it for the training of human personality. But God could not create a moral system in which there is no possibility for sin. As the definition of the modified omnipotence asserts, an omnipotent God need not be able to do what is impossible by the nature of things.

"If a moral system exists," says Harris, "it must consist of finite, and therefore fallible persons; each person must be progressive, adapted to the character, attainments and development of the finite persons. The possibility of sin and the liability to commit it are therefore inseparable from a moral system. Here, however, observe it is conceivable that all rational persons in forming character may always choose right. But the possibility of sinning, and the consequent liability to sin in finite persons are

[16] Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, 879 ff., and Strong, *op. cit.*, 1035-1052.

[17] Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, p. 310.

inseparable from the moral system. Almighty power cannot create a moral system of rational persons, each of whom develop himself and form and confirm a character by his own free action, without the possibility of thir sinning and their consequent liability to sin. . . . It is impossible for God by an act of almighty power to determine the free choice of a rational free agent. It is no more possible for God by resistless almighty force to determine a man's free self-determination than it is possible for him to create a circle with the radii unequal."[18]

According to this theory a moral system involves freedom and freedom the possibility of sinning. If God were to create man with freedom but not free to sin he would be violating the law of contradiction. And if God cannot do the illogical his power is not limited thereby because it is impossible by the nature of things. But does it not involve a question of divine benevolence if God had created a free agent whom He has to condemn when he go astray? Harris vindicates God for his merciful attitude toward sinners, saying:

"He forsakes no sinner until he sees that the sinner has by his own action so confirmed and fixed his evil character as to be beyond the reach of moral influence to turn him back to the life of faith and love. Then as incorrigible, and only then, sinners are abandoned to themselves. They are left to gratify their own sinful desires and to follow their own sinful determinations. The evil which they suffer is the corruption and perversion of their own being. The final sentence, Depart, is only the declaration of the final and unchangeable separation from God."[19]

As to the divine disposal of sinners Sheldon says that a philosophical justification of an irrepeatable sentence against a man (incorrigibly wicked) is found solely in the possibility of moral suicide or the extinction of spiritual capacity by continued perversity.[20] Sheldon is inclined to prefer it to the theory of eternal suffering which is more repugnant than annihilation to the modern sense of punitive justice. Still the question remains that it is so far a defeat of God's creative aim if he is to destroy a created being on account of the misuse of his gift well-meant.

Our ultimate doubt seems valid against Harris, that the existence of sin absolutely foreign to the divine nature yet created by finite man, a second cause as a free agent, would involve God as the ultimate ground of sin, or else God through a second cause has indirectly created a being independent of God if it can eternally persist in sin. In criticism of the freedom theory Brown says that it makes a man mightier than God, since in a single instant of time he has been able to accomplish, through his free choice, what all the centuries of divine activity have been unable to undo.[21]

[18] Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. I, 231 ff.
[19] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 575.
[20] Sheldon, *op. cit.*, 575.
[21] Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 275.

(2) Educational Theory. This theory, which is repudiated by all the authors mentioned in the foregoing two solutions of the problem is taken up by Brown and is generally accepted by Clarke in his earlier work, *An Outline of Christian Theology*. Brown applying the principle of education to the problem of moral evil maintains that it has a necessary part to play in the unfolding of the divine plan; not only the possibility of sin but sin itself is an indispensable element in the world's moral training.

Through sin, says he, "there has been brought about a closer communion with God and a higher type of character in man than could have been attained in any other way. . . . We cannot think it away from the world without at the same time thinking away with it that which we recognize as supremely precious. It is through sin, with its consequences in our own lives and in the lives of those we love, that we learn, as we could learn it in no other way, our need of God, our constant dependence upon him for salvation and strength. It is through sin, with its deadly havoc in the world, making appeal to the finest sympathy and the most complete devotion, that we learn the meaning of Christian service. . . . So far from being the proof of a world which is undivine, it is the means by which God is teaching us his profoundest lessons, and fitting us for communion with himself. . . . The Christian experience makes it possible to believe that all evil may serve a good end; but it does not of itself prove it. This proof remains for the future in the hope of immortality."[22]

The solution given by Clarke in his earlier work is a mixture of the freedom and educational theories. The gift of freedom, says Clarke, implies the possibility of sin —the power of self-ruin as well as of perfection in moral life.

"Thus God could not create man in his own likeness without putting into his hands the power of introducing evil. And God must have known that what came would come. If God thus knew that sin would come, it is incredible that sin formed no element in his plan. If he framed his creation of man so that it would come in, he must have had a purpose that included it, and he must have intended in some way to make it serve his own worthy end,"—an end that included "the presence of moral evil and the turning of it to his own good use—the production of strong and virtuous souls."[23] "It is," Clarke adds, "in the universe of such a God that sin is at work, and he is at work against it. If he does not banish moral evil from his universe by winning all souls to holiness, it will be because spirits that he has endowed with the amazing gift of freedom persist in evil to their own ruin, though he seeks to save them."[24]

Thus it is argued that God is using sin for educational purposes and that sin justifies God because it has its place in the universe of a good God as a means, not for the glory of God primarily, but for the necessary training of human personality. Certain pertinent questions, however, suggested by those who have refuted this theory still remain unsolved.

[22] Brown, *op. cit.*, 207-210.
[23] Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 156.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Harris considers that the educational theory makes sin a necessary means for moral training, but the theory is unsatisfactory because sin ceases to be real evil if it is useful to a moral system[25] and Sheldon objects that it "puts God in the odious light of taking evil into His plan for the sake of good, whereas the ordinary ethical code of men condemns those who do evil that good may come."[26] Moreover, if God could create in the course of human history a perfect manhood in Jesus without a horrible experience of sinning, as Brown[27] and many other theologians believe, why could He not educate every man without involving deadening evils? Furthermore, a God, who, being himself a perfectly moral person and the absolute author of the universe, could not create perfectly moral beings without educational means of evils, seems not omnipotent even in a modified sense.

(3) Evolutionary Theory or Sin as Contingent to Life Process. The most plausible solution of the problem of sin on the hypothesis of modified omnipotence is that held by Ward and by Clarke in his later work, *The Christian Doctrine of God*. Sin is now regarded to be incidental to the life process in which many persons are working with a certain amount of initiative for each individual. God is also responsible for the existence of sin, but he is utilizing it for good purposes and therefore God is justifiable as omnipotent as well as supremely good. We will divide the discussion into three topics as follows:

(a) Men as Co-Workers with God in Evolution. Ward gives his solution of the problem of sin along with a discussion of the evolution of moral sense in humanity, and asserts that sin is contingent to life in a moral system. In the universe in which many selves are acting and interacting, the rise of sin is inevitable. He considers moral evil to be essentially selfishness as theologians do, yet selfishness has its roots in that instinct of self-preservation, which is called the first law of nature. How then does what is thus rooted in right nevertheless become wrong? To love himself a man must know himself, but he can know himself only through knowing other selves; neither self-love nor selfishness then is possible below the social level. A man in his social intercourse discovers himself with diverse desires and motives for action which are often in conflict with those of other men. Mutual approval or disapproval of certain deeds leads him to the recognition of a moral standard by which he judges his subsequent action as right or wrong, egoistic or al-

[25] Harris, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 238-240.

[26] Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 308-310, also Harris, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 233-237.

[27] Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-351.

truistic. Such distinction of right and wrong is inevitable in the evolving world of many. Now having acquired a moral standard of right and wrong, and conscience that approves or disapproves certain acts, why does a man not always follow the right direction but is often tempted to opposite ways? Ward contends that such temptation and the power of free choice are the very thing that makes possible the evolution of moral life to an ever higher level.[28] Ward here cites Huxley's objection to this theory. "I protest," says Huxley, "that if some great Power would agree to make me think always what is true and do what is right on condition of being turned into a sort of clock, I should instantly close with the bargain. The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right; the freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with on the cheapest terms." But freedom and clockwork, replies Ward, absolute routine and yet continuous progress in self-knowledge and self-control—these are flagrant contradictions. The contingency of evil in the world cannot be construed into a sign of moral imperfection in its constitution; such contingency is inseparable from any creation that is evolutionary in such wise as to leave free agents more or less initiative.[29] God's world indeed contains moral evil, "not because of any necessitation on His part but because of the free acts of us, who are joint-workers with him in the world's evolution."[30]

(b) Joint Responsibility of God and Man for the Existence of Sin. The conception of men as co-workers with God calls for the question of the responsibility for the existence of sin. Ward ascribes it wholly to men,[31] while Clarke brings out a clear reference to the joint-responsibility of God and men by his conception of a fourfold responsibility. Virtue and sin, says Clarke, are natural growths in the field of the life of humanity. If there is a good God over all, he is a good God who has himself produced a world of mingled good and evil. It has been shown how naturally the moral element came into the human lot. Sensation belongs to the nature of life, judgment between sensations makes life rational, and choice among judgments and sensations makes life moral. Morality comes as soon as men begin to choose, and consequently to act, either with or against the worthier appeal. Responsibility comes when the choice or act is intelligent enough to be one's own. It is by a perfectly natural movement that life has moved on through these successive stages.

[28] Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, pp. 364-372.
[29] *Ibid.*, 379.
[30] *Ibid.*, 382.
[31] *Ibid.*, 439.

Man having emerged into a moral world through such process cannot avoid the mingled state of good and evil, as he is still constantly struggling for higher spiritual life amidst his animal and social inheritances ever pulling backward.[32] Now the locus of responsibility for the existence of sin is clear. For the great world order, in which good and evil have come into existence according to natural process, God is responsible. For the accumulated inheritance of good and evil which any given individual received in his personal constitution, the human race is responsible. For the acts and choices that make or mar the character and destiny of the man, the individual himself is responsible. And for the innumerable influences that affect the individual, and help to make his character and conduct right or wrong, the responsibility is distributed among the many persons, past and present, who have done good and evil in the world. Thus among God, humanity, himself, and his various fellows is divided the responsibility of any man's moral condition and conduct.[33]

(c) The Significance of Moral Evil. The attribution of responsibility to God for the existence of moral evil seems to constitute an indictment of either the divine goodness or power. But Clarke vindicates God by his account of the significance of sin. Sin is an anomaly, says Clarke, produced by the normal action of such a being as man. But why is an abnormal element wrought into the system of God? The soul in humanity, Clarke observes, was not born into peace but into moral conflict. It was an inward conflict between the past and the future, between what was and what ought to be, between what should be abandoned and what should be attained. The conflict was within, at the seat of the will. "The battle must be fought out by his willing and acting now in one way and now in the other, living his divided life, learning by experience, and coming to unity after being first divided against himself."[34] But our question is: Can the good God have created such a life? For life itself contained the secret of such a moral conflict. Clarke's answer is that God was right in creating life, even though its unfolding brought the evil with the good.

"At the element of training," says he, "through moral conflict which we find in life we need not be offended, for we know of no other way in which character was to be formed and the right destiny of the soul attained. Perhaps we cannot declare it to be the only way, for perhaps we do not know; but we can say that it certainly corresponds to human nature. We at least have seen no other method of attaining to confirmed high character. Moral education must be inward through experience.

[32] Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 450-453.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 454.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 457.

Ultimate character, whether good or bad, implies an inward victory over the opposite. Character untested is insecure. In men, settled moral character seems to imply personal knowledge of good and evil: not of all possible good and evil, of course, and not of some specific amount or intensity of strife, but such acquaintance and such conflict as to make the victory secure when it has been won."[35]

Clarke thus justifies the existence of evil as a necessity of life in evolution. Christianity does not accept, says he, the dilemma that if God is love he is not almighty, and if he is almighty, he is not love. It believes that He is both. "His character is perfect and his power is adequate to his character. It is true that clouds and darkness are round about him. We cannot solve the questions or see our way through the perplexities, but that does not alter our God."[36] Such is the conclusion of Clarke on the problem. With all its ingenuity, this is rather a confession of impossibility to solve the problem than a solution. If God is in part responsible for the existence of sin, it would logically follow that he is either not all-good or not almighty. Yet God must be believed, says Clarke, to be both almighty and all-loving as traditional faith declares.

3. Summary. Four solutions are current for the problem of sin on the hypothesis of modified omnipotence, namely, (1) So-called Scriptural or the fall theory, (2) Moral system or freedom theory, (3) Educational theory and (4) Evolutionary or the incidental-to-life theory. The first three are inconsistent with one another, while the fourth combines the second and the third in its support. In the first solution the origin of sin is attributed to the fall which was embraced in the divine plan. This gives an advantage to the assertion of omnipotence, but by so much it disparages the divine goodness by including sin in God's plan of the universe. The second solution makes human freedom solely responsible for the genesis of sin not in the divine plan. The divine goodness is thus saved; but omnipotence may be defeated by human freedom, since there is a possibility of sin which God cannot restrain. The third theory makes sin a means for the training of life; its advantage is that God is using sin for the future good and therefore he is vindicated. But it attenuates the evil of sin to define it as a means for a good end, and at the same time it raises a difficulty with omnipotence if God has to use evil means for good ends. The fourth theory conceives sin to be an unavoidable incident to evolving life; even the good God cannot eliminate it at once. Therefore his omnipotence is not impaired, if sin is unavoidable to the development of life. These theories after all

[35] Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 460.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 461.

cannot easily be harmonized into a summary because all the subtle points of argument lie in the shades of meaning in the content which varies with different authors even if they use the same name. Indeed, different conclusions may be reached from identical premises. Thus the last solution of the problem which regards sin as incidental to life is asserted to preserve the divine omnipotence by Clarke and Ward, while by others such as Johnson and McTaggart it is regarded to be the very proof of non-omnipotence. We shall, then, close this chapter with an account of non-omnipotence hypotheses.

III. Solutions of the Problem by Denying Omnipotence. 1. Evolutionary Theory. Johnson, as already said, takes a position similar to Ward's in explanation of sin but he feels more comfort in denying omnipotence than in affirming it. The Creator's character, says he, is expressed to us in those qualities which are manifested by his creatures. If creatures are not perfectly efficient, the fact reflects a defect in the Creator.

"God be praised," says he, "because we see in Him the reflection and source of whatever things are pure, lovely, morally and physically beautiful, and because we trace back to Him as their author, all such qualities as justice, mercy, truth, and love. . . . while He has made justice and mercy, loyalty, and unselfish love adorable, has He not also made them most difficult, permitting their opposites so to root themselves in our nature and so dominate us with their insistance that our vital energy is often given to them even while our respect and reverence go out toward their rivals? . . . But it is only through the antagonisms of good and evil in the moral consciousness of man that character becomes actual. Without the presence of these two principles of moral light and darkness, men might be morally sentient, but never morally intelligent, or morally efficient, beings. Through their conflicting agency morality emerges from the realm of feeling into that of energizing, overcoming, creating."[37]

Thus the rise and antagonism of two principles, good and evil, are inevitable in the course of moral development, and God who could not create life without its incidental evil, Johnson reverentially asserts, should not be called omnipotent, since the divine choice of creation was limited to the alternatives, namely, either the world without life or the world with life and its incidental evil. Our world of evolution, which God preferred, cannot avoid the mingled presence of goods and evils, both physical and moral, in the upward struggle of sentient existence. God who is so limited that he cannot but admit sin in his universe if he is to create at all, may be perfectly benevolent in his intents, but as he has to struggle against the evil of the created world, it is better not to call him omnipotent in his power. In a word, the God whom Johnson holds before us is a finite God "like ourselves" as we have already seen

[37] Johnson, *God in Evolution*, pp. 116-118.

in our chapter on evolution. "Shorn of the word *omnipotence*," says he, "the idea of God becomes something more real, more intelligibly worshipful and infinitely more moral and loving, inspiring."[38]

2 Dualistic Theory. Another solution on the hypothesis of a creative yet non-omnipotent God, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is that of the author of *Evil and Evolution* who introduces a Satanic power to explain the genesis of sin. It is easier to believe, says he, in the beneficent goodness of the Creator if we are also at liberty to believe that there is in the universe some other power thwarting and opposing that beneficence, and we cannot help thinking that much of the difficulty that men experience in realizing the goodness of the Creator is attributable to the abandonment of a belief in Satan.[39] So he rejects all other theories explaining the cause of evils, especially such theories as the free will, the educationary, the evolutionary theories. He asserts that there is no need of evil as the contrast to good, nor sin as the contrast to virtue. God can create the perfect world of a moral system which does not require any incidental evils for the development of character. Selfishness would never degrade into sin in the benignant reign of an omnipotent God; it could exist in perfect harmony with love, but for the intrusion of an evil Power! In order to prove further his position by an aid of science, he first attempts to describe how selfishness without deteriorating into sin could exist in harmony with love in the perfect world of God. He also tells us that the variety of life is possible without mixture of evil; that culture is possible without passing through primitivity and war; and finally that effort is not excluded from perfect life. All these are meant to prove that evil is not necessary nor incidental to life, if the world were created by a perfect God. Here we give his argument for the perfect world.

(1) Harmony of Selfishness and Love Possible in a Perfect World. Selfishness, the author holds, is a fundamental law of life. But when the unfolding of life had reached the point at which evil would result from the unmodified working of that law of mere selfishness, some other law, such as the law of love, could be made to dominate and control the other principle so that the lower instinct of selfishness could never assert itself to produce injury or unhappiness.[40] Illustrating the point with facts about a bantam cock and his hen, the author urges that all observers of nature know very well that the predominance of love against the play

[38] Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[39] *Evil and Evolution*, p. 10.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 131 ff.

of selfishness is to be found very extensively throughout the animal world nor can it be set down as a mere matter of sex. "That animals will subordinate their own appetites and interests to the requirements of their young of course everybody knows, but it is by no means confined even to such relationships. Individual animals are often capable of conceiving attachments which quite override their innate selfishness. Throughout a large proportion of animal life upon the globe, self-assertion and its opposite are so nicely balanced that life is peaceful, harmonious, and upon the whole, happy. Moreover, it is a fact that as a ruling principle love is the highest, the strongest, the best." Evolutionists are agreed, he adds, that it is just the fierce struggle of created things that has produced birds and beasts of prey, and that it is the malignity of the struggle that has produced the venom of so many reptiles; a world in which self-assertion always gave place to benignant good will could never have evolved such things as tigers and puff-adders. But then why need they have been evolved? His contention is that the Creator could never have designed that they should be. "To conceive that a beneficent Creator deliberately intended to produce myriads of sentient creatures to be actuated by unmitigated selfishness, and to go on for untold ages 'tearing each other in their slime' is to my mind impossible."[41] His conclusion is that there must have been some malignant spirit, a devil, who brought selfishness into predominance in the place of love and disturbed a perfect adjustment of the world made by the beneficent Creator.

(2) Variety of Life Possible Without Evil. As to the wonderful variety of creatures which is supposed to be less possible if there were no evil ones, the author asks whether it might not have been equally varied, curious, and interesting in other ways without the evil. If the bee can live entirely on honey and seemingly be one of the happiest and cleverest of creatures, is there in the nature of things any reason why the spider might not have lived and been happy without murder and treacherous cunning? Keep a swarm of spiders, says he, in a narrow confine, they would simply devour each other so long as there is one left to attack another. The character of the spider is something horrible. And, the author asks, was this ever designed? At any rate he asserts that under the conditions he supposes, much of the lower life would have been different, but not less wonderful, not less varied and admirable.[42]

[41] *Evil and Evolution*, p. 138.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

(3) Culture Possible Without Primitivity and War. Primitive stages of feud and warfare are often supposed to be a necessary medium through which man passes from animalism to civilization. The author's contention is that it is quite unnecessary in a world created by an omnipotent God supremely good. No doubt, says he, that warfare has itself produced very remarkable characteristics and marvelous faculties, but how many faculties has it stunted and destroyed?

"In the human world, if a man takes a predatory habit he may indeed sharpen his wits and cultivate his powers of cunning and deception, but he is spoiled for every honest and useful purpose, and where you have two or three generations of men of this type the characteristics of the thief become all but ineradicable. In such a case, do you say that these characteristics are what the Creator intended for the man? Of course not. . . . It is commonly said by anthropologists that men were first hunters, then shepherds, and next tillers of the ground. Through all three stages the waging of war upon each other has certainly been a main factor in the formation of character and in the direction of industry. Now under a régime of perfect benevolence the entire hunting and shepherding periods of warfare in the development of mankind would have been altogether eliminated. The human race would have made direct for peaceful industry, for art, and science, and social organization. . . . Through all life there would be just enough of the salt of selfishness to impel every creature to take care of itself, but higher and stronger than this would be that universally diffused benevolence which, in taking care of itself, carefully avoids doing injury to another. Why then, aggressiveness, pugnacity, hostility, war, carnivorous propensity? . . . Nature is, to a frightful extent, red in tooth and claw, full of cruelty and injustice, pain and unhappiness; and the Designer of it, who, if He is omnipotent and supreme, might have obviated it all, has chosen not to do so. Or has it pleased Him to work this way, and we, His puny puppets, may hope and trust and pray, but we must suffer and struggle and die to work out His awful scheme of things? Why, it cannot be! There is some other power. The beneficent working of those laws *has* been disturbed, and the Creator is striving, and successfully striving, to restore the balance and adjustment of things."[43]

The author supposes that the malignant power might have entered just at that point, where in the slow unfolding of life, love and selfishness first came into conflict. Assume, says he, that just there a malignant power effected a disturbance of the natural laws under which things were unfolding, and you have a theory which accounts intelligibly for every phase and form of the world's moral and social evil, while you leave the character of the Creator purely benevolent.[44]

(4) Effort not Excluded from Perfect Life. Finally we come to the question of effort, whether it is possible in a perfect life to have zest of activity without any evil to conquer, any sin to subdue. Effortless life would be no blessing. The author's contention is that the perfect life he supposes is not a life of stagnation; effort there must be for further

[43] *Op. cit.*, pp. 147-154.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

development of life, but that effort will never be perverted into evil or sin, if life is created by a perfect God.

"Here is the perfect life," he supposes, and asks, "what sort of a world must it be that is entirely adapted to it? Must it be a world of all sunbeams and Zephyrs—totally without anything like hardship or difficulty, anything calculated to tax endurance and stimulate energy? No; such a world, of course, would be totally lacking just that which gives life its greatest zest, and which is quite essential to health and happiness—something difficult to achieve, something that demands effort, something that fills the mind with interest and gives a purpose to existence. It must be a world full of variety, sharp contrasts, exhaustless interests, affording the fullest scope for every faculty of mind and body."[45]

The author's point is that hardship and effort need never deteriorate into evil or sin in a perfect scheme of things. But the fact that our world is otherwise must be explained differently than by traditional theodicy.

"It must have been," says he, "the design of the Creator that love should have been universally the dominant force, and this would have been a law as universal and invariable as the law of gravitation. The rule of selfishness would always have asserted itself as a strictly subordinate force. The manifest truth that has not been the case is to be attributed to the fact that at a momentous point a disturbing influence was exerted. The result of the 'maladjustment' has been a radical change in the nature of much of the life subsequently evolved. It seems equally clear that a secondary result would be a radical alteration of the whole organization of society."[46]

(5) The Devil as Cause of Maladjustment. Thus the author of *Evil and Evolution* advances his hypothesis that the very fount of all the maladjustments must be traced back to a Malignant Spirit with stupendous creative and administrative power.[47] "The simplest and most satisfactory solution of that riddle of all ages is just the old one—that the Supreme Ruler, in his beneficent activity in the universe, is confronted by another power; that in the absolute, literal sense of the word God is not omnipotent; that He is engaged in a conflict which to a certain extent limits his power, and the final issue of which can be wrought out only in the course of ages. In plain terms, there is a God and there is a devil, and the two powers are in conflict."[48]

We have given above two solutions on the hypothesis of creative yet non-omnipotent God. Mill and McTaggart give their solution of the problem of sin on the theory of non-creator or designer God without almightiness, but we shall defer this theory till a concluding chapter where the non-omnipotence hypotheses are definitively gathered up in order to give a unified view.

[45] *Op. cit.*, pp. 161-163.
[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 167 ff.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Summary

We have in this chapter enumerated seven types of solutions to the problem of sin, and they are briefly as follows:

(1) Possible Solution by affirming Absolute Omnipotence. If we want to assert absolute omnipotence, there is no other way than to deny the intrinsic reality of sin and treat it merely as an illusion due to a finite view. But if the existence of such an illusion itself is evil, God must be responsible for it. And if sin as such is real, the solution of the problem is impossible on the hypothesis of absolute omnipotence and absolute benevolence.

(2) Solutions by affirming Modified Omnipotence. Hence the theologians who assert omnipotence with some modification, attempt to solve the problem mainly in four different ways, namely, (a) Scriptural theory—The first of them try to include sin in the divine plan which seeks the glory of God himself, since man is simply a divine means to an end. They picture reverently a cosmic drama of the original perfection, the fall, and then the redemptive dispensation. This, however, is to attribute sin to the divine causation, although they illogically deny it to God, and ascribe it all to the free will of man. (b) Freedom theory—Those who feel the inhumanity of the above theory seek their solution in the freedom of man. God created a moral system in which the possibility of sin was inevitable, but man needed not fall into sin. Hence it can scarcely be said that sin was in the divine plan, but, as it exists, sin is solely due to the free will of man. (c) Educational theory—Those who feel the difficulty with the above solution which makes human freedom bulk so large as almost to defeat the divine power of control, suppose that sin is somehow embraced in the divine plan but only for the good of the creatures, namely, for training of their character. God cannot perhaps train character without the means of sin and evil, but that does not, they hold, impugn omnipotence, since it simply means that God cannot do what is impossible by nature of things. (d) Evolutionary theory—If this be so, the fact that God uses evil to accomplish good may either tend to obliterate the distinction between the two, or may discredit the divine power if he has to use evil (sin) for the training of men. So, the evolutionary solution combines the best of the former two and says that man has not so much freedom as to defeat God's power by evil-doing, nor is sin in the divine plan, but it is incidental to the process of life. Those who espouse this theory conceive that men are co-workers of God in evolution, with a certain amount of initiative. Men created sin, but the conditions that led them to the misdemeanor

are ultimately due to God as the Creator of the universe. So they conceive a joint-responsibility of God and men for the existence of sin and evil. But they think that this does not disparage omnipotence nor supreme benevolence, because the fact of sin and evil is due to the nature of things in development and impossible to be eliminated even by an omnipotent God at once. God who cannot do the impossible, according to their definition of omnipotence, is not limited in power.

(3) Solutions by denying Omnipotence. Finally we come to the non-omnipotence solutions: (a) in one of which it is held that the very fact that God could not avoid incidental evil and sin if He were to create the world of moral system, shows that He is limited in power. Hence it is better not to call Him omnipotent as soon as we admit, as in the previous solution, the co-operation and joint-responsibility of God and men in the works of evolution. (b) Another solution is the hypothesis of a foreign Power coexistent with God. Here it is supposed that if the supremely good and omnipotent God were the Creator of all things in the universe it must be perfect as himself. There must be, of course, a certain amount of selfishness, hardship, competition, and the like opposite of good and virtue, but these would never deteriorate into sin and evil in a perfect world. The fact that our world is otherwise would call forth the hypothesis of a secondary Power whose disturbing influence is the cause of maladjustment, and thus it supposes that we can keep the perfection of God's benevolence intact by giving up the idea of divine omnipotence.

CHAPTER VII

The Problem of Human Freedom and Omnipotence

Problem

The problem of human freedom is closely connected with the problem of sin, since moral evil is supposed, by many theologians, to originate in the free will. God created man as free agent, and as a free agent, we are told, man is responsible for all his conduct. But on the other hand, it is asserted that "creationism must logically exclude the possibility of freedom. For the Creator cannot, of course, create except by exactly and precisely conceiving, otherwise his product would not differ from non-entity."[1] Since God is the source of all being, says Clarke, all being is dependent upon him and subject to his control.[2] If God is thus the creator of all things, how much of control has he over his creatures? This is the problem of freedom. Such question as this, however, is not usually included by theologians in the problem of omnipotence but in that of omniscience. Yet since an omniscient Being cannot realize his eternal plan without being omnipotent, the assertion of the divine omniscience always implies the divine omnipotence. And on the other hand, omnipotence implies omniscience: if God is not omniscient he cannot be omnipotent, because he cannot do what he knows not how to do; hence non-omniscience may limit his omnipotence. Thus understood, affirmation of omnipotence must always imply affirmation of omniscience, and in this respect the problem of freedom and omnipotence is inseparably bound up with that of freedom and omniscience; for if human freedom defeat omniscience it would also defeat omnipotence. Our problem then can be restated in a combined form: namely, if God is omnipotent, and therefore omniscient, how far would he control human conduct by his knowledge, plan, and power? What kind of freedom, if any, can we have under the universal sovereignty of an almighty God who is also all-knowing? If he created us as free agents, does it not mean a self-limitation on his part, or is he still omnipotent and omniscient?

Possible Solutions of the Problem

I. Possible Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Absolute Omnipotence. (1) Monistic Absolutism. Let us first see whether we can make human freedom and divine omnipotence compatible by monistic idealism such as that of Royce. Royce does not assert absolute omnipo-

[1] Howison, *Limits of Evolution*, p. 341.

[2] Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 136.

tence explicitly. But as he identifies human will and divine will in some respects, human free will may be made perfectly consistent with divine will. Man is causally determined, according to Royce, by heredity and environment, but teleologically free in so far as he is consciously acting toward the fulfilment of his task or life plan.[3] This world, in its wholeness, is the expression of one determinate and absolute purpose, the fulfilment of the divine will.[4] Royce holds that in my act of fulfilling my task that is unique to me among all the different beings of the universe God is acting in me, that is, he wills in me, as the divine consciousness comprehends my life in its unity. But it is also true, says he, that "this divine unity is here and now realized by me, by me only through my unique act. My act, too, is a part of this divine life, that, however fragmentary, is not elsewhere repeated in the divine consciousness. When I thus consciously and uniquely will, it is I then who just here am God's will, or who just here consciously act for the whole. I then am so far free."[5]

But this individual self, according to Royce, has also a freedom to sin by "consciously choosing to forget an Ought that he already recognizes."[6] His free will in sinning then must also be attributed to the divine will as its part or else it is, as James puts it, "as if the characters in a novel were to get up from the pages, and walk away and transact business of their own outside of the author's story."[7] Thus it seems that there is no adequate solution of the problem on the monistic hypothesis by identifying man's free will with God's as Royce does, for then sin would disparage the divine goodness or else defeat his omnipotence by getting outside of his control.

(2) Immanent Transcendentalism. Let us now consider the problem by the hypothesis of traditional theology in which God, unlike that of monistic absolutism, is regarded to be an absolute and transcendent personality distinct from his creatures. If God in this sense is absolutely omnipotent and omniscient, all events in the universe can be absolutely determined, for then nothing would happen against his will. If anything happen contrary to his will, he can directly control and undo it at his pleasure, having foreseen it perfectly and known perfectly how tc counteract it. There is no question about the locus of the responsibility

[3] Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Vol. II, 293 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, II, 292.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 468.
[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 359.
[7] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 194.

if God has determined and can determine all events whatever, according to his omnipotence as well as omniscience. All human conduct would then be necessarily determined by the absolute sovereign, and man a puppet of the divine omnipotence. If there is an omnipotent God, says McTaggart, we are not responsible to him for our sins, nor has God any right to punish us. For punishment by itself is an evil and cannot abolish the effects of the sin for which it is inflicted, since what is done is done and can never be undone. Consequently no person can be justified in inflicting punishment if he might have avoided the necessity by preventing the offense, unless the final result of the sin and the punishment should be something better than would have happened with out either of them. But suppose any good result which might follow from the sin and the punishment could be obtained by such a God, in virtue of his omnipotence, without the sin or the punishment, then God would not be justified in punishing sin, because God could attain the desired results without the punishment. Hence we should not be responsible for our sins to God.[8]

II. Solutions of the Problem by Affirming Modified Omnipotence. McTaggart in the preceding section has dealt with the problem by supposing an absolutely omnipotent God, but, as we have seen in our second chapter, current theology has modified the definition of omnipotence in reference to God's rationality and morality. As God does not act in absolute ways since he has created free agents, we are said to have some freedom and consequent responsibility for our acts. Let us see what sort of freedom is possible in a different modification of the divine omnipotence.

1. Conception of Freedom in Quasi Absolute Omnipotence. As we have seen in the discussion of the purpose of creation, the theologians who affirm quasi absolute omnipotence consider men as mere instruments for glorifying the divine perfections. God made men as a part of his fixed eternal plan or decrees, and behind the plan there are his omniscient wisdom to make it certain and his almighty power to execute it. Chas. Hodge expounding this conception of the divine decrees, says that the end contemplated in all God's decrees is his own glory. "As God is infinite, and all creatures are as nothing in comparison with Him, it is plain that the revelation of his nature and perfections must be the highest conceivable end of all things." The content of such revelation, however, is a mere despotic caprice in our human sense, but Hodge calls it a divine pleasure. "Some are saved," says he, "and others perish

[8] McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, pp. 164-166.

not because some of their own will believe and others do not believe, but simply because, Thus it seemed good in the eyes of God."[9] Hodge also says that the whole course of history is the development of the divine plan, yet "Human history is little else than the history of sin."[10] It may be questioned if God is in history to realize his fixed plan, how far the human conduct is controlled by God. If a sinful act occurs only by God's permission, as Hodge holds, does it not amount to say that sin is sanctioned by God? At any rate, if sin does not occur except through the divine permission, is it the result of human freedom?

This question appears still more pertinent when we consider Hodge's account on the relation between freedom and foreordination or the divine decrees. The foreordination of all events, says Hodge, is not inconsistent with the free agency of man, since the divine foreknowledge makes man's act "certain" but not "necessary."[11] In spite of the contention that certainty is not necessity, Hodge's conception of freedom as self-determination is really nothing but determinism since the human nature according to which we determine our will is fixed. For he says that the moral character of dispositions or principles does not depend upon their volitional origin: "whether concreated, innate, infused, or self-acquired, they are good or bad according to their nature," and that nature is the ground of moral responsibility.[12] Thus, according to Hodge, man must be responsible for his inherent nature over which he has no control whatever. Such an idea of freedom and responsibility is intolerable to our modern sense of human personality. Sheldon, for instance, stenuously opposes this tenet and discards it as sheer determinism.[13]

Strong's conception of freedom is closely allied to Hodge's, though at minor points he makes objection to the latter. Hodge says that a wicked man is born wicked and a good man good; Strong largely accepts it as a presupposition of "regeneration," but he allows more freedom in the power of contrary choice and of modifying man's character, although "nine-tenths"[14] of human activity is predetermined by his nature and environment. This theory we may take as a typical self-determination theory of deterministic freedom, while we regard Hodge's as almost absolute determinism. Assertion of quasi absolute omnipotence is not inconsistent with this theory of freedom, but it must be admitted that

[9] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, 535 ff.
[10] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 544.
[11] *Ibid.*, I, 544-590, II, 298-304.
[12] *Ibid.*, II, 111.
[13] Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 301.
[14] Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 509 ff.

such human freedom does not amount to much, since our freedom is held to narrow limits of self-determination within inborn capacity by the eternally fixed plan of the almighty all-knower.

2. Conception of Freedom in "Deterministic" Omnipotence. In the definition of omnipotence (Chapt. II) we called for convenience sake those conceptions of omnipotence given by Harris and Brown "deterministic." This term may be ambiguous here, since all those who affirm modified omnipotence are deterministic in their conception of freedom, yet it must be understood that Hodge and Strong who are asserters of quasi absolute omnipotence verge toward pure determinism in content, while Sheldon and Clarke who are classed among the asserters of "creative" omnipotence have some indeterministic element. So we may properly call Harris and Brown asserters of "deterministic" omnipotence. Here we give only Brown's self-realization theory of deterministic freedom as it is typical in relation to the assertion of "deterministic"omnipotence.

Human freedom, according to Brown, is man's voluntary obedience to the laws not of his own make but of reason, as he says that "Spirit is the sphere of reason and of freedom which transforms blind submission into willing service."[15] Man's freedom then does not involve a limitation of God's power, since there is no faculty of choice in man beyond what is determined by his nature. Man has no power to raise himself above his character which is conditioned by heredity and environment, both physical and social. "This does not mean," says Brown, "that the determinist regards character as something fixed and unchangeable. On the contrary, he recognizes that it is the subject of a constant development (or deterioration), in which choice, with its resultant judgments of praise or blame, is the determining factor. His contention is simply that this whole process of training takes place under law, so that, if we knew all the influences which enter into the making of any choice, we could predict its outcome with certainty."[16] Thus he rejects the so-called libertarian conception as that of Benett, that there is in all choice an unpredictable element which essentially constitutes the moral responsibility of a personal agent.[17] Free will, according to Brown, is a coming back to one's own true nature. "Man realizes," says he, "his true ideal in the measure that his choice ceases to be arbitrary, and becomes the expression of a consistent character."[18] Man is just as determined

[15] Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 244; see also Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, Vol. II, 54..

[16] Brown, *op. cit.*, 246.

[17] Benett, *Religion and Free Will*, 282-285.

[18] Brown, *op. cit.*, 248.

by his nature as God is determined by his own nature. Man's character develops but to the certain limits set by God as his ideal. His destiny is prescribed by divine providence, and so he cannot be the sole author of sin. God uses sin and suffering for educative purposes in training of men. Such being the nature of freedom and its relation to sin, human freedom, Brown holds, does not interfere with the divine omnipotence, for man is supposed to be free only when he is within the divine law or dependent on the divine power. "Freedom," says he, "is not inconsistent with divine control. The limitation which is involved in its existence is a self-limitation, promoting rather than hindering the realization of God's plan, and hence may legitimately be interpreted as an expression of God's sovereignty."[19] God's self-limitation is thus understood not as real limitation but an expression of his omnipotence.

3. Conception of Freedom in "Creative" Omnipotence. Both Sheldon and Clarke believe that there is some margin of arbitrariness in human choice, and herein lies men's creative or initiative power by which he contributes to God's incessant work of creation. This kind of freedom belongs to what McTaggart calls the deterministic freedom of self-direction.[20] "The power of contrary choice," says Sheldon, "is a necessary endowment of man as a free responsible being."[21] Freedom thus defined, according to Sheldon, as a power of contrary choice signifies that a wrong act is also a free act if a man chooses it by his own self-determination, while by Harris and Brown wrong acts are regarded as unfree. This conception of freedom is taken up by Clarke in connection with the problem of divine omnipotence. Let us first see how he conceives of the classical idea of predestination since he is the least asserter of it among theologians in relation to the problem of freedom. Clarke rejects predestination in its absolute meaning but keeps it in a much attenuated form under the different name of "plan," as other recent theologians do.

"If we are not free," says he, "we are not responsible; in that case we can do neither right nor wrong and our life has no moral significance. Our nature affirms our freedom; and if we are not free, we cannot trust our nature, which affirms it—Doubtless our freedom is limited but surely it is real. Neither foreordination nor fate has slain freedom, but freedom lives."[22] "We know ourselves free, and yet find evidences of a *plan* in us that is not our own. Above the field of human freedom he (God) exercises a sovereignty in which there is no constraint. Evidence of this higher

[19] Brown, *op. cit.*, 117.
[20] McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, 140-145.
[21] Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 294.
[22] Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 145 ff.

sovereignty meets us wherever we find our lives falling into line, and working out a purpose that we did not form. Men are not forced to work out this idea which is not their own, yet God rules them from above their freedom."[23]

Thus we finally come to a predestination in spite of freedom, since man is made, according to Clarke, to realize the preconceived plan, being indirectly controlled by God's influence though not directly coerced. In respect to this position our question is: if an external influence which is working toward a definite end as in the divine plan is so decisive that it may ultimately determine his action, has man freedom? If not so decisive as to determine him, might not his freedom overstep the divine plan? We shall see the solution given by Clarke in the next paragraph.

Grant that man has freedom as much as God has given him, does not that gift imply God's self-limitation? Clarke pictures this self-limitation as a real limitation to divine omnipotence. God exercises, says he, direct control throughout the universe, save as he has set off spiritual beings with a certain independence. God has created free agents to whom he has given certain power to do their own will, even though it be opposed to him.

"By such creative action God has limited himself. He would otherwise have had the only will in the universe; but he has called other wills into being, given to each one a limited field of genuine sovereignty. It is plain that from the exercise of this created freedom, there may follow results that the will of God would not have produced if it had kept the field to itself. If the will of God is to be done in free beings, it must be done in accordance with their nature, through the freedom that he has given them. They must be willing to do it and do it willingly. Of course his will affects them in many matters where it does not appeal to them as moral agents; but wherever he seeks the doing of his will by the moral agents he has limited himself to moral means of influencing them. The will of God that men should be virtuous cannot be enforced upon them, for any action that was enforced would not be virtuous. Free spirit must be influenced, they cannot be forced. God shows respect for his creatures, and for himself as their creator, and upon the independence that he has given them he makes no attempt forcibly to intrude."[24]

God thus limits himself by creating free agents. Clarke, however, does not consider this self-limitation of God as an obstacle to his conception of omnipotence, because he does not admit that the self-limitation as God's free act is to be treated like an external limitation. If God, says Clarke, is not limited externally, he does not lose his omnipotence. But in reality if God has created free agents as objective realities in the universe, these free agents may at their will defeat the divine plan and eternally disobey God if they choose, since God cannot coerce them although he may try his best ever to influence them. Recognizing this

[23] Clarke, *op. cit.*, 150.
[24] *Ibid.*, 138.

difficulty Brown has rightly rejected this kind of freedom[25] and holds to his own more deterministic conception. The free will theory of this type, says Brown, asserts that God, in creating free agents, has limited himself, but this imperils the divine control: if God, in creating man, could not prevent man from sinning, what reason have we for believing that he will ever be able to do so?[26] If Brown's contention is legitimate, we may deny omnipotence, when we assert human freedom as Clarke does.

4. Summary. We need not recount here what we have gone over in this section, but simply note the fact that, as we come from Hodge to Clarke, and recognition of human freedom gradually increases, the problem of omnipotence grows tenser, and finally the assertion of freedom such as Sheldon's and Clarke's is regarded by some advocates of omnipotence as a dangerous ground. If we should assume any amount of human freedom which God has granted so that he cannot interfere with its free use, God must be regarded as no longer omnipotent. If God can, after having granted freedom, break at any moment into the sacred domain of human freedom, God would be omnipotent, but our freedom in that case would be nothing but a shadow. We have seen that the assertion of omnipotence even in a modified sense cannot avoid this dilemma, and more recent theologians are tending toward a denial of omnipotence, in the interest of human freedom.

III. Solutions of the Problem by Denying Omnipotence. 1. Human Freedom and Non-Omnipotence. The moment we deny the divine omnipotence, there would be no more problem of human freedom; man is not then circumscribed within a fixed limit of freedom. He is of course not absolutely free, yet there will be a region of his freedom nobody else can touch. Man himself is creative with his own initiative as God is creative. The universe would be a joint-product of God and men. This freedom involves more responsibility than is the case when we affirm divine omnipotence. "If there is a God who is not omnipotent," says McTaggart, "it would be quite possible for the determinist to hold that we are responsible to him for our sins. Such a God might be unable to create a universe without sin, or at any rate unable to do so without producing some greater evil. And he might find it possible, as men do, to check that sin by means of a system of punishments."[27] Thus McTaggart holds that the problem of human freedom and responsibility can only be solved by denying omnipotence.

[25] Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 275.
[26] *Ibid.*, 209.
[27] McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, 166 ff.

2. Dualistic Solution of the Problem of Freedom. The author of *Evil and Evolution* attempted to solve the problem of sin and evil, as we have seen, by assuming the intrusion of a diabolical power into the perfectly developing universe of good God. We also remember that he took issue with the theory that evil is inevitable in the moral system of free agents, his contention being that evil was not necessarily incidental to the freedom of the human will. So he had to show that the world of good God, unless disturbed by an evil Power, must have been developing perfectly well with freedom for human wills and with their efforts crowned with characteristic achievements. He now wants to establish his contention by the facts of practical life in which he supposes human freedom to be possible without producing any evil or human effort without any task of conquering evil, if God were the sole master of the universe. If he cannot prove that evil is not internally due to the moral system of free agents, then he cannot establish his theory of external intrusion of evil into the universe, and consequently his solutions of other problems by the dualistic hypothesis must also be thrown overboard. So we add here to the solution of our problem of freedom his arguments for the possibility of human freedom and effort without involving any evil consequences, unless disturbed by the Satanic power. As the author does not consider immaturity to be any imperfection, or at least evil, just as childhood is not any more evil than manhood, he conceives of the evolution of the universe to be a very smooth affair with everything perfect in its kind, unless disturbed by an external evil.

(1) Perfect Life and Freedom. The author has to show that perfect life is not the life of puppets but of free agents never deteriorating into evil, if God were omnipotent. "All that men," says he, "have ever dreamed or can dream of a heaven is implied in the single phrase, 'perfect creature in a perfect environment.' . . . Such a condition it seems to me in the highest degree probable that a beneficent Creator would design from the very first, and would desire to ensure through all the infinite unfoldings of creation." But how can we assume the highest possible type of manhood without supposing he is a free agent, and if a free agent, free to do wrong? It is like assuming the possibility of a perfect light while denying the possibility of a shadow. This old difficulty is met by the author with the following argument:

"We are all agreed that an essential characteristic of the highest manhood is free will. If you take away a man's power to do wrong, no doubt you injure his manhood by depriving him of the firmness and fortitude that come from trial and test, and of the conscious merit of doing right. Yet it is quite correct to say the higher the man, the nobler and stronger the character, the more impossible it becomes for

him to do evil." The archbishop of Canterbury, says the author, a high-minded gentleman with his salary £15,000 a year, does not pick a pocket although perfectly he is free to do it. "Perfectly healthy mind in a perfectly healthy body, placed in a perfectly organized world and ruled by laws absolutely adapted to the whole system of things, could not possibly think erroneously upon any subject involving questions of good and evil, could not possibly desire to do wrong, and yet that mind shall be free—literally free."[28]

(2) Perfect Life and Effort. It will be objected, the author observes, that such a world of perfect adjustment is quite inconceivable, and even if it were not, it would be a world not worth living in. There could be nothing like physical, mental, or moral thew or sinew. An earth in which sunbeams were never too hot and winter never too cold, in which every creature had just what was requisite, would be no world at all for the training of men. It might be all very well for rose gardens, but not for men. Evolutionists also contend that without the vigorous weeding out of the imperfect the progress of the world would not have been possible. Advance everywhere is by struggle with adverse surroundings. If all living creatures were perfect of their kind, there would be no development, no progress, for there would be no demand for exertion.

"Well it is false," retorts the author, "development is not necessarily by pain and internecine strife and antagonism. . . . All the higher developments of life are the outcome of an exactly opposite principle, and all the stupendous struggle of creation going on under our eyes is a struggle to get off that wrong line of development on to the right one. . . . A perfect world would have been quite as full of activity, quite as stimulating to every faculty of brain and body, but the stimulus would have been entirely wholesome, the activity would have been the joyous activity of health, and the outcome would have been good, only good. Progress is not necessarily by pain, and strife, and antagonism. . . . Any notion that a world of perfect adjustment would be a world of stagnating idleness and insipidity, a dead, uninteresting level of uniformity, a world without aims and objects, without ideals to stimulate or purposes to attain, is a notion that could originate only in a totally inadequate conception of what is implied in a world of perfect adjustment."[29]

Thus the author holds that effort has its place in the world of perfect adjustment: life will progress into an ever greater perfection through human freedom and effort.

We cannot know whether such a perfect adjustment is possible in the world of good God if it was not invaded, as the author supposes, by the diabolical power. But at any rate, if the author's contention is valid, it simply means that the indisputable fact of the existence of evils in our universe should be attributed to a Satanic intruder from outside, and consequently, our good God who is struggling with co-operation of men to extirpate this evil influence and maladjustment is no longer omnipotent until he triumphs, if he can, completely over the power of his enemy.

[28] *Evil and Evolution*, pp. 103-106.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 107 ff.

CHAPTER VIII

The Conception of a Non-Omnipotent God

As we gave at the outset a comprehensive view of the conception of omnipotence, we may now gather up at the close of our discussion constructive statements of the hypothesis of a non-omnipotent God. We wish to see what kind of God is possible if we are to deny his omnipotence. There are in the main two general types of non-omnipotence theory, namely, (1) a non-omnipotent God who is the creator of the universe, and (2) a non-omnipotent God who is not the creator but is simply working in it.

1. A Non-Omnipotent God Who is the Creator of the Universe. (1) Theologians' Concession to Non-Omnipotence. By way of transition from the omnipotence to the non-omnipotence conception, let us first refer to those theologians who make considerable concession in content to the non-omnipotence theory, although they are unwilling to give up the name of omnipotence.

James Ward, as we have seen, makes a pluralistic interpretation of theism and conceives of the universe as epigenetically evolving. This world is a world of the Many, although all the elements derive their existence from the unitary God as their initial Creator. Ward asserts that men are created free agents with a certain amount of initiative and independence in order to be co-workers with God in evolution. Clarke asserts human freedom to such an extent that God has limited himself in order to give each individual "a limited field of genuine sovereignty" and God is supposed to have no control over this domain of freedom except only to exercise indirect influence. Galloway likewise conceives of human freedom as an absolute initiative power. "We must presuppose," says he, "a free or uncaused cause which is the ground of its own action; the human will is such a free cause, and its movement is not to be reconstructed and explained by the aid of factors beyond itself."[1] Such an idea of human freedom and the conception of men as co-workers with God in evolution consistently ought to deny omnipotence in the strict sense of the word, since God has limited himself by the creation of his co-workers. God in this sense is analogous to a constitutional monarch who has delegated a part of his power to his subjects. Such a God cannot be omnipotent as the constitutional monarch is not absolute sovereign. But in spite of this fact these theologians tenaciously

[1] Galloway, *The philosophy of religion*, 537.

cling to the traditional conception of an omnipotent God by denying that self-limitation is real limitation.

(2) A Non-Omnipotent God as Working in the Process of Evolution. Johnson, as we have seen, supposes that God, being limited in power, has possibly had only two alternatives in his plan of creation, namely, either to create a world without life or a world with life and incidental evil. God chose the latter alternative as the better, but as it is not the best he is incessantly through the process of evolution engaged in the task of conquering the evil incidentally involved in his creation. "His work," says Johnson, "gives the impression of one who moves slowly, tentatively, as it were feeling His way, to some dimly foreseen end by the use of instrumentalities not thoroughly mastered." If God is experiencing such a task of evolutionary process, he is probably, though Johnson does not clearly indicate, a growing Being as we are growing in wisdom and love through the experience of trial and error. Such a God, Johnson declares, should not be called almighty, but shorn of the term omnipotence He becomes infinitely more real, worshipful, and inspiring.

(3) A Non-Omnipotent God as Creator but Hindered by a Rival Power. The author of *Evil and Evolution* conceives of God as perfectly benevolent and also powerful, and therefore, if the creation of the universe were left alone in his hands, he might have produced a world of perfect adjustment and harmonious beauty without involving any incidental evil. The author sees traces of this divine ability in many facts of nature and the workings of natural laws. But the fact that our world is in the mixed state of good and evil must be explained, the author maintains, by the intrusion of a foreign Power. A diabolical Power of evil which is co-existent and independent of God has disturbed the perfectly developing world of the good God. God cannot therefore be called omnipotent until he triumphs over his rival Power and completely eliminates the invaded evil.

(4) Criticism of the Conception of a Non-Omnipotent God as Creator of the Universe. Both the theologians who affirm omnipotence and those who modify or deny it, as far as we have shown in the preceding paragraphs, believe God to be the *de novo* Creator of the universe. The universe with all that it contains owes its existence to God. Galloway considers creation as dependence of our existence on God, the world ground; nevertheless it practically means that we owe our existence to the unitary Being. Now McTaggart finds this conception of God as Creator inadequate and inconsistent with our conception of God as supremely good, no matter whether omnipotent or non-omnipotent.

If God is the original Creator of the universe, even though he may not be omnipotent, nothing can exist, says McTaggart, except as God wills it. For nothing can exist unless he decides to create it—unless, that is, he prefers its existence to its non-existence.[2] Now, the present world as it is includes evil. If God is the sole and *ex nihilo* Creator of it all, the evil must be somehow attributed to him, even if he is not omnipotent. It may be contended on the non-omnipotence hypothesis that God has, as he is supremely good, never intended to produce evil, but that evil exists against his will because of his limitation in power, just as a good man who does not wish to do evil yet produces it sometimes because of his impotence to avert it. McTaggart here observes important difference between man and a creator God, even if God is not omnipotent. Man is part of a universe, all the parts of which are connected. And, therefore, when a man wills to do something and cannot do it, his impotence is never due entirely to his own nature. Whereas, with a creator God the matter is different. At the moment when he creates nothing exists except himself. He is the only existing reality. Whatever happens must be explained from his nature, and from his nature alone, for there is nothing else anywhere. It is from his own nature, then, that we must explain the limitation of his power. Suppose that God endeavors to produce whatever he wills antecedently, e.g., a world without evil, but that he cannot create it because he is limited in his power. But, since we should believe that whatever he as the *de novo* creator willed would find nothing to hinder it, the impossibility of creating a world without evil rests entirely in his nature, and his nature in acting is expressed simply by his will. If this is the case, the Creator of the universe cannot be a completely good God. For then the cause of the evil in the universe is not that the Creator could not do what he antecedently willed to do. Whatever he antecedently willed to do has been done. But a person whose antecedent will includes the production of evil cannot be good. And a being who is not good is not God.[3] In view of this, McTaggart repudiates the idea of God's creatorship even if he is not omnipotent, in case we want to conceive of God as supremely good. It leads us then to the positive statement of a non-omnipotent God who is not the Creator of the universe.

2. A Non-Omnipotent God Who is not the Creator of the Universe. By this hypothesis is meant that God is not the original creator of the universe, but is possibly a designer or contriver without unlimited

[2] McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, pp. 223-225.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 230-232.

power. He is of course creative in the sense that men are also creative in their own way of combination and reconstruction, but he is not the sole Creator and master of the universe, since he is hindered by many external obstacles which do not easily yield to his will, or since he has used uncreated material in his creative work.

"According to this theory," says McTaggart, "all the non-divine existent beings of the universe are co-eternal with God, and have not been called into being by his will. Their existence is an ultimate fact, and a fact which God has simply to accept, as will all have to accept it about one another. God can affect the condition of these other beings, in the same way that they can affect the condition of one another, and, presumably, of God. So far there is no difference between God and other persons. The difference is quantitative. God is conceived to be so much more perfect in goodness than his fellow-persons, that the due attitude of all of them, even the highest, towards him is that of reverence and adoration. And he is conceived to excel them so much in wisdom and power that his efforts are capable of producing important effects, not only in one small corner of the universe, but in every part of it. His position towards us is that of a school-master towards his scholars. He does not create us. He cannot destroy us. His power over us is limited. And we can resist his power, and in some cases our resistance is effectual—at any rate for a time, perhaps permanently. But, on the other hand, his power is greater than the power of any one of us, and is so great that it can do much, though not all, of what he wishes to do throughout the universe. Independently of his exertions the universe would not be completely bad, since beings who are capable of improvement cannot be completely bad. In spite of all his exertions, he has not yet succeeded in making the universe completely good. It is uncertain what his eventual success will be. But it is at any rate certain that the universe is better because he is working in it."[4]

Among all the possible conceptions of God this hypothesis of a non-omnipotent God who is not Creator seems, says McTaggart, to be by far the most tenable one.

"There is no more difficulty in believing such a God to be a person than in believing myself to be a person, since he, like myself, is one member in a universe, none of the other elements in which are dependent on him for their existence. These other members, therefore, may form the Other of his personality. Nor does the existence of evil in the universe reflect, of necessity, on his goodness, since it may possibly all be due to defects in the constitution of the other beings co-eternal with him. In that case, of course, we should know that God's power was not sufficient to remove these evils, but this need not imply defective goodness in him, any more than it would in a man. He is only responsible for making the evil as small as he can. And the existence of evil does not prove that he has not done this." We may admit, McTaggart urges, that there is nothing antecedently impossible in the existence of such a God as this. "Persons do exist. And of these persons, some excel others in virtue, some in wisdom, and some in power. It happens not infrequently that one person surpasses another in all three. There seem no reasons why one person should not surpass all others in all three to such an extent that his goodness would enable him to dominate the universe as much as an efficient school-master dominates his school."[5]

[4] McTaggart, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 236 ff.

There are about three different views on this hypothesis of God as neither Creator nor omnipotent Being. The first of them conceives of God as designer of the universe, using material co-existent with him. The second theory is decidedly Gnostic. The universe may be created by some other power but our God is simply the principle of good that is working in it for its improvement. The third one is the conception of a finite God who may be one of many gods in a pluralistic universe.

(1) A Non-Omnipotent God as Designer of the Universe. McTaggart as shown above has given up the idea of creator God in the interest of saving the divine goodness on the ground that he has to attribute the existence of evils to God if God is the sole creator of the universe. John S. Mill for similar reasons conceived of God as a designer, and not Creator of the world. It was said by Kant long ago that God would not necessarily be a creator if the design argument, which is the strongest of all theistic proofs, is to show the divine existence. God would rather be, says Kant, an architect of the world, "always hampered by the quality of the material with which he has to work, not a creator to whose idea everything is subject." One only form of belief in the supernatural which stands wholly clear both of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity, says Mill, is that which resigning irrevocably the idea of an omnipotent Creator, regards nature and life not as the expression throughout of the moral character and purpose of the Deity but as the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material, as was believed by Plato, or a Principle of Evil, as was the doctrine of the Manicheans.

"A creed like this," says Mill, "allows it to be believed that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by, and exists not by the appointment of, but in spite of the Being whom we are called upon to worship. A virtuous human being assumes in this theory the exalted character of a fellow-laborer with the highest, a fellow-combatant in the great strife; contributing his little, which by the aggregation of many like himself becomes much, towards that progressive ascendency, and ultimately complete triumph of good over evil, which history points to, and which this doctrine teaches us to regard as planned by the Being to whom we owe all the benevolent contrivance we behold in Nature."[6]

Every indication of design, Mill argues, in the cosmos is so much evidence against the omnipotence of the designer.

"For what is meant by Design? Contrivance: the adaptation of means to an end. But the necessity for contrivance—the need of employing means—is a consequence of the limitation of power. The very idea of means implies that the means have an efficacy which the direct action of the being who employs them has not. . . . Wisdom and contrivance are shown in overcoming difficulties and there is no room

[6] Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, pp. 116 ff.

for them in a Being for whom no difficulties exist. The evidences, therefore, of Natural Theology distinctly imply that the author of the Kosmos worked under limitations; that he was obliged to adapt himself to conditions independent of his will, and to attain his end by such arrangements as those conditions admitted of."[7]

The appearances in Nature, Mill continues, point indeed to an origin of the cosmos, or order in Nature, but not to any commencement, still less creation, of the material elements of the universe. "The Deity had on this hypothesis to work out his ends by combining materials of a given nature and properties. This did require skill and contrivance, and the means by which it is effected are often such as justly excite our wonder and admiration; but exactly because it requires wisdom, it implies limitation of power."[8] Mill's conclusion is that whatever in Nature gives indication of beneficent design, proves this beneficence to be armed only with limited power.

(2) A Gnostic Conception of God not as Creator but as Redeemer.

H. G. Wells in his recent novel makes his hero Mr. Britling say that theologians hitherto had "silly absolute ideas" about God, considering him to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omni-everything. "God is not absolute," says he, "God is finite. . . . A finite God who struggles in his great and comprehensive way as we struggle in our weak and silly way—who is *with* us—that is the essence of all real religion."[9] In this book the author takes rather a Manichean view of the universe as a battlefield of the two rival principles, good and evil. But in his more recent work, *God the Invisible King*, in which the author claims to have expounded the God of practical life, he espouses frankly a Gnostic view of God not as Creator but as Redeemer.[10] Wells characterizes the creator, if there is any, as a sort of Gnostic Demiurge, but in contemporary thought, he asserts, "this Demiurge is either good or evil; it is conceived of as both good and evil."[11] God, according to the author, who has written under the influence of the present European War, is a militant Spirit of good who is constantly fighting against evil and trying to make improvement upon the work of Demiurge the Creator. "This new faith," says he, "worships a finite God, who is neither the maker of heaven nor earth." But he "is a God of salvation; he is a spirit, a person, a strongly marked and knowable personality, loving, inspiring, and lovable, who exists or strives to exist in every human soul."[12] "It

[7] Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 177.
[9] Wells, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, pp. 405 ff.
[10] Wells, *God the Invisible King*, Preface p. XII.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

is for us to serve Him. He captains us, He does not coddle us. He has his own ends for which he needs us." Wells compares his God to "a dear, strong friend who comes and stands quietly beside me, shoulder to shoulder."[13] This God exists in time and grows as mankind grows.[14] It is not God the Father but the Son, a Christ-like God.[15] Wells thus denies omnipotence and creatorship to his God, and asserts Him as a king, a captain, the champion of all that is good, and love.

(3) A Finite God as a Director of the Universe. We finally come to a form of idealism which James and McTaggart propose to us as the most reasonable. "The only way to escape," says James, "from the mystery of the 'fall,' of reality lapsing into appearance, truth into error, perfection into imperfection; of evil, in short—the only way of escape, I say, from all this is to be frankly pluralistic and assume that the superhuman consciousness, however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently finite."[16] The line of least resistance, both in theology and philosophy, says he, is to accept along with the superhuman consciousness, the notion that it is not all-embracing, the notion, in other words, that there is a God, but that he is finite, either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once.[17] James characterizes his finite God thus as having an environment, being in time, and working out a history just like ourselves.[18]

In this idealism of experience nothing is taken as real except what is known, and with its known reality it goes to conjecture by analogy that the universe is consisting of conscious persons in mutual relations. "Reality *may* exist," says James, "in distributive form, in the shape not of an all but of *a set of eaches*."[19] Among these eaches or persons there may be one directing person who greatly excels all others both in wisdom and power, and who can be worshipped as a God if he is also good. Such a director of the universe, says McTaggart, as one of a society of selves, may not be perfect in all respect, since it is difficult to think that one member only is *completely* perfect while others are not. "We see," says he, "of course, in every day life, that people of very different degrees of perfection may be closely united. But I do not see how there can be any unity at all if each is not helped by

[13] Wells, *God the Invisible King*, p. 35.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[16] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 310.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 311.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 318.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

the perfection, and hindered by imperfection, of every other. Any hindrance must prevent the person hindered from being quite perfect, and this seems to render God's perfection impossible."[20] Hence, he holds that even moral perfection is also unascribable to a non-omnipotent God.

McTaggart pursues further the logical implications of his conception of imperfect, finite God. If the director of the universe is finite, he asks, why should we be certain that there is only one? Many of the facts of experience, while they are compatible with the theory of a single director working under limitations, suggest at least as strongly the idea of several such beings, working in opposition, or possibly partly in harmony and partly in opposition. Or supposing that only one director is at work in the part of the universe which we know, still that part may be very small compared with the whole. How shall we tell that there are not other regions—perhaps separated from ours by vast immense intervals—in which other beings, higher or lower than he whose work we perceive here, are working out other independent and isolated purposes? There is nothing, perhaps, which should prevent us from giving the name of God to each of several beings simultaneously existing. It may not be impossible to revert to polytheism, or to conceive God as striving against other persons who equal him in everything but goodness. But the name of God seems to imply that the person to whom it is applied is of appreciable importance when measured against the whole universe. A person who was only one among millions of similar being would scarcely be allowed the name. And yet this may be the case with the person, if there is only one, to whom we owe all the order and purpose which we can observe in the universe.[21] Thus according to McTaggart the God whom we know may not necessarily be the only director of the universe, but he may be one among many such directing persons. Yet he is worthy of our reverence and adoration if we owe him the good that we enjoy.

3. Summary. Among those who deny omnipotence, we noticed two distinct types, i.e., (1) Those who hold that God is the Creator of the universe although he is limited in power, and (2) those who deny also the creatorship of God who is not omnipotent. The reason of the denial is very obvious, namely, if God is the *de novo* creator of the universe, even though he is not almighty, the existence of evil must be attributed to his creative work, but then the fact of evil disparages the supreme goodness of God. God, on the other hand, can be free from any conscious

[20] McTaggart, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 257 ff.

authorship of evil, if he is not the creator of the universe but is simply working in it for its improvement. We have seen three different conceptions of God on this hypothesis: God may be a designer of the cosmos working on coexistent material, or may be a spirit of good making improvement upon the universe created by other than himself, or finally, he may be, as in pluralistic idealism, one of many gods, but is particularly intimately related with us because of his beneficence.

CHAPTER IX

Conclusion

I. Restatement of the Problem of Omnipotence and its Solutions in a Simplified Form. As we have observed in the main discussion, all the problems connected with omnipotence involve the problem of evil. The fact of evolution does not give rise to any problem of omnipotence unless it involves the evils due to conflict and struggle, destruction and waste. The existence of imperfections as mere immaturities does not constitute a problem of omnipotence unless the imperfections are at the same time felt as suffering or evil such as death, disease, error, maladjustment. While pain and suffering as physical and mental evils have their place, sin as moral evil is of course located at the very center of the problem of omnipotence. This involves the problem of freedom—freedom to act contrary to the nature and character of God the all-master of the universe. Hence the problem of omnipotence centers around the problem of evil. If our observation is correct, the pivotal point of the problem can be tersely restated in the following manner.

1. Fundamental Presuppositions. In our inherited thought God is a perfectly moral (or good) as well as almighty creator and governor of the universe.

(1) If this be so, the existence of evil in the world is incompatible either with the perfect goodness or with the omnipotence of God. For if God be perfectly good and almighty, it is natural for him to create all things good and perfect rather than to fashion them short of the character which the creator himself possesses in superabundance. We can easily solve the problem if we deny either of the two attributes, that is, goodness or omnipotence. Suppose we deny the divine goodness, the presence of evil becomes nothing problematic because God himself may be wicked, but a wicked being ceases to be God; hence this denial of goodness is destructive to theism. If then we deny omnipotence, the presence of evil may be ascribed to a foreign power or rival principle of evil, or may be regarded as due to the intractability of the material God has used in creation, or due to his faulty workmanship.

(2) But the theological interest that adds difficulty to the problem is the desire to affirm both perfect goodness and omnipotence.

(3) Theologians feeling the difficulty have modified the idea of omnipotence by saying that omnipotence does not mean power to do

anything whatever, but ability to do only those things logically and morally possible to do. God exercises his almighty power only in rational and ethical directions. Does this modification do away with the difficulty in affirming both goodness and omnipotence? We will handle the question both in the affirmative and the negative.

2. The Strongest Points in Favor of Affirming Omnipotence in a Modified Sense. (1) God had either to create a moral system in which free agents are to develop their character through the free exercise of their power of initiative, or else to create a mechanical system in which all things are puppets or machines to execute slavishly the command of their task-master. God has chosen the former alternative, as the law of reason precludes all other possibilities. The problem of evil then can easily be solved by asserting that a moral system is a system that involves evil to be vanquished; if there is no evil, there would be no moral task. Hence the contrasts between virtue and vice, good and evil, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, are a necessary implication of life, or at least they are inevitably incidental to the developing life of free moral agents. God *ex hypothesi* need not be able to do what is impossible. And so if he cannot eliminate evil in the moral world, his omnipotence will remain intact. We can indeed in our present status of knowledge hardly conjecture the perfect world in which there is no moral task of conquering evil and which should yet be a moral world. A world which gives us no task for conquering evil would be a non-moral or supermoral world. It may be a blessing, but that blessing would be scarcely felt as blessing unless we have in contrast a hardship to attain it or suffering that accompanies our failure to attain. The author of *Evil and Evolution* supposes the possibility of effort and hardship in his perfect world, but if we are absolutely sure that our effort would never bring failure nor our hardship entail suffering, that effort would cease to be effort and that hardship no longer be hardship. Our joy of achievement would be almost reduced to nothing, a shadowy semblance, if there were no sorrow to obstract our quest of happiness. The reality of joy and pleasure, the truth of good and virtue, we cannot feel unless there is the reality and truth of their opposites. Our life is an evil-conquering task. If it were perfect in every detail, there would be even no life at all, but a perfect machine that runs in its grooves.

(2) The second point that speaks for the vindication of the ways of God, as has already been stated, is the conception of human freedom. We admit that the greater part of human suffering is suffering from sin and sin is mostly due to human free will. God is justified if we say

that it is logically impossible to grant freedom to man and prevent him at the same time from making a wrong choice. For, God *ex hypothesi* cannot make a logical contradiction, and if he cannot do the illogical his omnipotence is not thereby limited. The author of *Evil and Evolution* holds that freedom is not incompatible with sinlessness. But his contention seems to be unwarranted. Freedom means a power of contrary choice, a choice between two or more possibilities. Suppose we had a freedom to choose good only but no evil at all, then our freedom would be reduced to half the range which we can have when we are free to choose evil as well. If there are any possible varieties of choice in diverse degrees of good, our freedom would be half as much as we can have when similarly possible varieties of choice are open for us in the diverse degrees of evil-doing. We admit that God might have granted 180 degrees of freedom by prohibiting us to meddle with the hemisphere of evil, opposite to that of good. This would be indeed a freedom, and so far perfectly compatible with sinlessness because we have no freedom to sin. God might have been able to create such a world of one-sided freedom, but within that realm of good, if we are left to choose freely one act instead of or in preference to another when we are to act at all as free agents, this rejected act would become a lesser good in comparison to the chosen one. Then by repeated actions of a similar sort, or through our experience of lesser goods and greater goods, there will soon grow up a standard by which we shall be habituated to judge certain acts as less good than others. And this habitual depreciation of certain acts will gradually bring them down to the category of evil and will reject them as not to be chosen at all in preference to other acts. Acts of free choice then involve a creation of good and evil, even if there were no original distinction between good and evil, or even if there were good alone. Thus I think this argument from human freedom with its logical incompatibility with non-evil or sinlessness is a sharp weapon against the non-omnipotence hypothesis. Can we not suppose that God knew that human freedom entails evil, but that his gift of freedom is a wiser divine choice than its alternative which would have incurred a greater evil? This way of vindicating God McTaggart regards as a confession of non-omnipotence since God is limited in his possibilities. But McTaggart, it will be recalled, takes the word omnipotence to mean ability to do anything whatever. Now, theological definition precludes this kind of omnipotence: it holds that God is omnipotent if he can do all that is possible logically and morally. Granting freedom on the one hand, and preventing the free agent from making a wrong choice on

the other—why, this is a logical impossibility. If God cannot do this, his omnipotence will not thereby be impaired.

3. The Strongest Points in Favor of Denying Omnipotence even in the Modified Sense of the Term. We have briefly set forth the strongest defense of omnipotence in the modified sense by the appeal to logical consistency on the part of God. Supposing that it is illogical to create a moral system without the task of conquering evil, and to grant freedom without power to make wrong choice, God cannot be charged with impotence on this account. But this defense gives rise to many objections and arms its opponents with weapons to their advantage.

(1) The above defense of omnipotence rests upon a logical consistency but it does not follow that logical consistency must be preferable to moral excellence. If God be perfectly good, could he create or permit evil in order to be logically consistent with the moral system which was to be created? We need not follow McTaggart here and say that logic itself is God's creation, and if God were omnipotent he could remake the laws of logic whenever they become incompatible with the moral demand for absence of evil. But let us suppose as Johnson does that God had to create the world with life and its incidental evil or else he had to create none at all in order to be logically consistent because there would be no virtue without vice, no joy without sorrow. God has chosen a lesser evil. If the divine choice were thus limited to such an alternative which at all events includes evil, we can hardly admit that God is both perfectly good and also omnipotent in his nature. Johnson and others would rather give up the idea of omnipotence than to do dishonor to the divine goodness.

(2) But the ordinary theological conception of God is not such as Johnson supposes. God is perfectly moral and has for himself no moral task to conquer evil. A moral system, it is said, necessarily involves evils to be conquered, but this logic is not used in the account of the divine character. If God is perfectly moral and yet does not sin, does not do wrong, then this very idea is a confession of the fact that there is a possibility of a moral being or system in which there is no need of an evil-conquering task.

It may be said that God had to conquer evil in himself but this was a matter of long past. He has already accomplished his task and so he is now perfectly moral yet has no longer any task of conquering evil. But this concession is to make God's life imperfect as a whole, as it embraces the past and the present. If God has made a complete break

with the past, and the past evil is absolutely forgotten, he is no longer moral but a non-moral being since no moral being is possible without a moral task according to the definition. At any rate, granting that there is a possibility (as in case of God himself) of moral perfection which does not involve the incidental necessity of evils to be vanquished as its moral task, it would lead us necessarily to own that there is something which is possible but which God cannot do, hence he is not omnipotent. The same thing can be said of freedom. If God is a free being, yet does not make a wrong choice in his free act, there is the possibility in the universe of a perfect freedom compatible with perfect sinlessness. If, this being possible, God *did* not create his free agents in such a manner that they would never make a wrong choice, he cannot be perfectly good; or if he *could* not, he must surrender his claims to omnipotence because he could not do what it was possible to do.

(3) On the other hand, let us assume as theologians do that no moral system could avoid incidental evil for its moral task of triumph. And let us also assume that no free beings would be infallible in their choice of acts. Then our God must be regarded as embracing evil in his own moral existence beacuse he as a moral being also needs an evil-conquering task in himself. And God has no safeguard against wrong choice in the free exercise of his power because he is regarded to be a free agent par excellence. This is, however, to sacrifice the divine goodness on the score of his omnipotence.

(4) For these reasons, it seems better to give up the idea of omnipotence, rather than to make the divine character embrace evil by supposing God to be perfectly moral and perfectly free. For it is far more consistent with our moral sense to hold that God as a perfectly moral being would create a world, if it were possible, without any evil, true to his nature, but that, limited in his power, he cannot realize this ideal at once. This is far better than to conceive that God is perfectly good and omnipotent, and so must be able to create the world just like himself, yet *does* not, permitting instead evil in it for moral training or some other purposes. In this case God's moral character can not be perfect although he may be perfectly omnipotent.

4. Further Reduction of Divine Omnipotence as to Creatorship. The divine omnipotence is closely connected with his creatorship. Creation has indeed been offered as the veritable proof of his omnipotence. But as McTaggart points out, we can no longer consistently affirm God's creatorship if we deny his omnipotence. Suppose this world as a moral system to be developing through the process of evolution. The very

idea of an evil-conquering task seems inevitably implied in such a system. We can easily admit some amount of evil as necessary for a moral world, but the world as it is at its present condition with, for instance, such an atrocious warfare as we have now in Europe, and with such a perversion of moral standards and social ideals even among Christian thinkers some of whom justify war—such a heinous aspect of life as we now experience, extremely trying and tormenting to our ideals of brotherly love—such we can never think as necessary to a moral system or to the evolutionary development of humanity at all. Such a world as this in which many phenomena of life simply exist as sheer negation of what is good, as destroying and devastating, wasting and weakening what has been achieved and accomplished, can never be a result of God's creative task—the creative task consciously executed by a good God. If God be the *de novo* creator of this world in which diabolical evil is so rampant that it goes beyond the bounds of ethical necessity or educational utility, God cannot escape the charge against his benevolent character. Such a thing as the present European war, it may be said, is totally due to human avarice and wickedness. But who is the creator of those wicked men? If God is the original creator of all things, he must be responsible for all the evil that there is. Is it not more comfortable to think, as Wells does, that the world is not created by God, but that as it exists it is in a process of evolution, and God, no matter whether he be one of the products of evolution or not, is only a directing force in it of good which is guiding us toward the endless production and perfection of what is good and beautiful. God, if limited in power, may make mistakes and this may cause evil, but we need not doubt his moral sincerity and enthusiasm in the effort to eliminate evil under whatever form it arises in the process of evolution from the lower to the higher stage of moral achievement.

II. Religious Valuation of the Different Positions. As we have summarized the salient points of argument both for omnipotence and non-omnipotence in their relation to the problem of evil, we may finally undertake to estimate the religious advantage and disadvantage of the opposing hypotheses. We will take up first the negative aspect and then the positive aspect of their religious value.

1. Religious Disadvantages of Typical Positions. (1) Religious Disadvantages Involved in the Assertion of Omnipotence. Some of those who affirm omnipotence tend to ignore evil as ultimately unreal, holding either that it is being transmuted into good (Royce, Hocking) or that it is outbalanced by good (Bradley). Some of them attenuate

evil by considering it as educative means for the good of humanity (Brown). But this tendency to ignore evil as unreal is declared by James and McTaggart to be against the facts of practical experience. If evil exists, even as an illusion, the fact would disparage the divine perfection either in goodness or power. The theory that considers evil as educative means is objected to by such theologians as Sheldon who asserts that "it puts God in the odious light of taking evil into His plan for the sake of good, whereas the ordinary ethical code of men condemns those who do evil that good may come." Thus the assertion of omnipotence in this manner tends to detract from the divine benevolence, which is one of the highest values in religion.

Clarke, Ward, and Galloway consider the existence of evil to be inevitably incidental to the life of free conscious persons co-working in the process of evolution, but they attribute responsibility to God for creating the conditions which render possible the existence of evil. "A Deity," says Galloway, "who creates beings that may sin and who in fact do sin, must be held to be, so far, responsible for the consequence of his creative action."[1] "No doubt God must have a certain indirect responsibility for moral evil; and of course a more direct responsibility for natural evil."[2] Clarke also refers to the joint-responsibility of God and men for the origin of evil. If we have thus to make God responsible for the existence of evil in order to assert his omnipotence, it is better, thinks McTaggart, to give up the idea of omnipotence in the interest of saving the divine goodness intact, since an omnipotent God who produced evil cannot be regarded as supremely good. A religious disadvantage here then is the inevitable questioning of the moral character of Deity for the sake of asserting his omnipotence.

The problem of evil is confessed, by some theologians, to be not fully soluble on the hypothesis of omnipotence. We cannot solve, says Clarke, the question or see our way through the perplexities, yet God must be believed to be both almighty and all-loving. Garvie also says that "a complete solution is not possible. . . . Here we walk by faith, and not sight; we are saved by hope."[3] Such confessions of ignorance can scarcely help toward an adequate knowledge of God in our ardent quest. Indeed, the mystifying of the divine personality with such an "awe-inspiring" idea as omnipotence is held by Johnson to separate him from our practical life. "Omnipotence," says he, "divided Him, as

[1] Galloway, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 543.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 541.
[3] Garvie, *A Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, p. 151.

by an unfathomable gulf, from us. We worshipped we knew not what, a being of inconceivable attributes."[4]

"Evil becomes a problem," says Hocking, "only because the consciousness of the Absolute is there."[5] The problem of evil as to its origin is due to our interest in affirming both Divine omnipotence and supreme goodness, that is, His absoluteness. If God is not good, the existence of evil becomes no problem; or if God is not almighty, evil may exist against His will, in spite of His supreme goodness. Hence if we are to deny either of the two attributes, the problem of evil would immediately vanish. When we face this dilemma, to save either the divine goodness or omnipotence, we would naturally prefer the former alternative, since God cannot be God, as McTaggart maintains, if He is not supremely good. Insistance upon omnipotence is thus always accompanied by our scepticism about divine benevolence, as Galloway, who affirms omnipotence, says that it is impossible to absolve God from all responsibility for evil.[6]

(2) Religious Disadvantages Involved in the Denial of Omnipotence. Those who deny omnipotence conceive of their God not as absolute but as finite. Evil is real, and as to its origin there is no problem for them because it exists in spite of the good God who is not absolute. Mill conceives it to be due to the faulty workmanship of a non-omnipotent God who has to use intractable matter coexistent with Himself. Johnson considers evil as incidental to evolving life. God could not, being limited in power, create a world without evil. McTaggart and James on their pluralistic hypothesis regard evils as non-divine constituents of the universe. Wells attributes evil to the Demiurge or the world Creator who is not God, while the author of *Evil and Evolution* introduces the independent power of evil coexistent with God. All these theories, except Johnson's, are based upon either dualistic or pluralistic view of the universe. The idea is detrimental to our monotheistic enthusiasm and love of unity.

Again, the conception of a non-omnipotent or finite God is found unsatisfying to many theologians. Garvie says that the Christian could not maintain the certainty of his salvation had he any doubts of God's power.[7] "We could not live," says Hocking, "without the Absolute, nor without our idea of the Absolute. . . . Accepting fully the pragmatic

[4] Johnson, *God in Evolution*, p. 92.
[5] Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 203.
[6] Galloway, *op. cit.* 527.
[7] Garvie, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

guide to truth, we conclude that the only satisfying truth must be absolute—that is, non-pragmatic."[8] Our pragmatic data of experience do not give us any intimation of the Absolute nor absolute truth, but no one would deny that our quest after God implies a quest after a non-pragmatic absolute ground of our life. "The inner insufficiency of earthly goods impels the religious spirit to go beyond the world and seek its goal in a transcendent Good."[9] Such a demand for absolute Good indeed, as Hocking says, causes the problem of evil,[10] but our need of the Absolute in practical life arises from our desire to conquer evil and make our victory sure.[11] If God is admittedly imperfect and finite, how could we have peace and tranquillity of soul and the assurance of final victory in our struggle for life over forces of evil? If omnipotence is denied to God, we are liable to be led to a pessimistic outlook of the world such as is found in John S. Mill. Wells's finite God is a militant being grimly fighting against diabolical evils but not giving one the sense of decisive triumph. McTaggart finds, says Hocking criticising his *Some Dogmas of Religion*, that "his finite God becomes an intruder, and an obstacle to the loyalties of the spirit."[12] Indeed, McTaggart himself confesses that a finite God plays less part in human life than an absolute Deity. "If God's moral character is saved by limiting his power," says he, "we have no right to be confident as to the eventual victory of those ends in which God is interested. We know that he will work for them, and we know that they will be the more triumphant or the less defeated because of his efforts. But we do not know that they will be completely triumphant."[13] Hocking's conclusion is that a finite God is of no worth and that "we must be able to reach a kind of maturity in respect to God himself in which we are ready to assume the burden not only of omniscience but also of omnipotence, with regard to some fragment, however minute, of the historical work of the universe."[14]

"Things which have the highest of values least admit of valuation."[15] To estimate critically and intellectually the personality of the Divine Being may tend to debilitate our absolute faith and confidence in Him. To make every item of the divine attributes rationally consistent may

[8] Hocking, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
[9] Galloway, *op. cit.*, p. 438.
[10] Hocking, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 205.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
[13] McTaggart *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 259.
[14] Hocking, *op. cit.*, pp. 502 ff.
[15] Moulton, *The Modern Study of Literature*, p. 492.

result in a reduction of religious sentiment. Religious faith does not grow as a consequence of logical argumentation, but it is essentially the heart's aspiration to something higher, nobler, more beautiful in life. Thus the denial of omnipotence is thought to be unsatisfying to the aspiring soul.

2. Religious Value of Typical Positions. (1) Religious Value of Affirming Omnipotence. Hocking in whom the current of James's pragmatism and that of Royce's absolutism meet, asserts from his functional viewpoint the need of the Absolute in religious life. "The known God-function tends to disjoint the humanity of the thing worshipped. What the worshipper has before him is not man, but man denied; man at war with all that is false in his own humanity; man overcoming himself; man in *Untergang*, as Nietzsche would have it, giving way to Superman."[16] Ward who attempts to harmonize the claims of pluralism with those of theism also asserts that "the idea of God would be meaningless, unless God were regarded as transcending the Many; so there can be no talk of God as mere *primus inter pares*. On the other hand it would be equally meaningless to talk of God apart from the Many. A God that was not a Creator, a God whose creatures had no independence, would not himself be really a God."[17] "God in short is the absolute Genius—the World-Genius. Any analogy drawn from our experience must then be inadequate to such an experience: God's ways are not as our ways nor his thoughts as our thoughts. But the difference lies simply in transcending the limits to which our experience points but can never attain."[18] Our demand of God thus implies that God should be one who transcends human finitude not only in goodness but also in power. Our burden of sorrow is lightened through our confidence in the divine power. "We are indeed lifted above evil or borne through it by our attachment in the Absolute."[19] We do not so much care about the origin of evil but we are particularly concerned about its disposal. It is not cause but end that gives rise to the practical problem of evil. And what we desire of God is assurance of victory over all that is detrimental and injurious to life. Our faith in an absolute God therefore is considered to be adequate to the heart's demand for a superhuman reality. "In God we have," says Hocking, "the notion of an other-than-all-men, and an Other whose relation to me is not subject

[16] Hocking, *op. cit.*, p. 482.
[17] Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 241.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[19] Hocking, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

to evil through its own defect; one from whom therefore I can anticipate no pain that must refer me to still another for its transmuting."[20] Brown expresses more forcibly the religious value of our faith in omnipotence.

"There is," he writes, "no doctrine which is practically more important than that of the divine omnipotence. It led Christ to go cheerfully to the cross, confident that his cause would triumph in spite of apparent defeat. It has given courage to the martyrs and saints of every age. It is the *only* sure stay of faith in the midst of the imperfections and discouragements of the world. In face of obstacles apparently insuperable, faith bears the promise, 'with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible,' and answers with the confession, 'I believe in God the Father almighty.'"[21]

A finite God who is limited in power would be greatly reduced in his divine function. It is a common desiderate of the religious person that if God exists he must be perfect in power as well as in goodness. God transcendent yet immanent, the unitary ground yet multiple in manifestation, omnipotent yet acting in limited ways, absolutely good yet struggling with evil, the sole creator of the universe yet not the creator of evil—such ideas may be logically inconsistent, but our conative demand transcends logic and we desire our God to be supremely powerful to surmount every obstacle laid before us.

(2) Religious Value of Denying Omnipotence. Wells observes that "the real God of the Christians is Christ, not God Almighty."[22] "God, in the religious life of ordinary men," says James, "is the name not of the whole of things, but only of the ideal tendency in things, believed in as a superhuman person who calls us to coöperate in his purposes, and who furthers ours if they are worthy. He works in an external environment, has limits, and has enemies." The line of least resistance, James continues, both in theology and philosophy, is to accept the notion that God is not all-embracing, but is finite, either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once.[23] Thus rational consistency, as well as the fact of practical religion, is claimed on the side of denying omnipotence, and reasonableness is no doubt a religious value.

The author of *Evil and Evolution* who denies omnipotence by attributing evil to a rival power of Satan, says that if you assume the disturbance of the perfectly evolving universe according to natural laws by the intrusion of a diabolical power, "you have a theory which accounts intelligibly for every phase and form of the world's moral and social evil, while you leave the character of the Creator *purely benevolent.*" The idea that

[20] Hocking, *op. cit.*, 223 ff.
[21] Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 117.
[22] Wells, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, p. 406.
[23] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 311.

evil is somehow essential to Divine purposes "has been infinitely pernicious in obscuring and darkening the wholly benignant character of the Creator."[24] The author's contention is that the perfection of divine goodness cannot be kept intact unless we deny the perfection of his power.

Johnson who considers God as a growing being and therefore finite, says that "shorn of the word *omnipotence* the idea of God becomes something less awe-inspiring, perhaps, less mysterious, less removed from us and all our possibilities, but on the other hand, it becomes something more real, more *intelligibly* worshipful, infinitely more moral and love-inspiring. He appears as one who shares the battle with us, who counts on us as supporters in the world process. . . . He is one to love and to work for. Our devotion to Him is not a mere fleeting incense, it is a positive factor in a world-not-yet-finished, in a process which may be advanced, or hindered, by the way in which we lead our lives. What we should most earnestly desire is not the absolute confidence of the foregone conclusion, but an unconquerable faith, a faith that is synonymous with devotion, courage, loyalty."[25]

Wells also expresses a similar sentiment of loyalty and devotion to his finite God:

"Now it follows very directly," says he, "from the conception of God as a finite intelligence of boundless courage and limitless possibilities of growth and victory, who had pitted himself against death, who stands close to our inmost beings ready to receive us and use us, to rescue us from the chagrins of egotism and take us into his immortal adventure, that we who have realized him given ourselves joyfully to him, must needs be equally ready and willing to give our energies to the task we share with him, to do our utmost to increase knowledge, to increase order and clearness, to fight against indolence, waste, disorder, cruelty, vice, and every form of his and our enemy, death, first and chiefest in ourselves but also in all mankind, and to bring about the establishment of his real and visible kingdom throughout the world."[26]

Let us finally refer to Mill's ennobling conception of the place of human effort in such a universe which is directed or governed by a non-omnipotent God.

"One elevated feeling this form of religious idea admits of," says he, "which is not open to those who believe in the omnipotence of the good principle in the universe, is the feeling of helping God—of requiting the good he has given by a voluntary co-operation which he, not being omnipotent, really needs, and by which a somewhat nearer approach may be made to the fulfilment of his purposes. The conditions of human existence are highly favorable to the growth of such a feeling inasmuch as a battle is constantly going on, in which the humblest human creature is not incapable of taking some part, between the powers of good and those of evil, and in which every even the smallest help to the right side has its value in promoting the very slow and often almost insensible progress by which good is gradually gaining ground from evil, yet gaining it so visibly at considerable intervals as to promise the very distant but not uncertain final victory of Good."[27]

[24] *Evil and Evolution*, p. 158.
[25] Johnson, *God in Evolution*, pp. 91 ff.
[26] Wells, *God the Invisible King*, pp. 104 ff.
[27] Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 256.

The advantage of the denial of omnipotence is in short that it would have appeal to the intellectual persons to whom logical consistency is no less vital than their heart's demand. In this democratic age of ours, there are many people who feel disappointed to think that we are, as creatures, simply to follow the fixed plan of the Creator, or we are ultimately under his control. Their enthusiasm toward works of culture would be stimulated if they could believe that we are ourselves creators in our own little ways, and if we have God on our side we can help him as we are helped by him. Such a feeling as this, as Johnson, Wells, and Mill have enthusiastically expressed it, would give them ennobled faith and confidence in human capacity, worth and dignity, and consequently strengthen their self-imposed sense of duty and responsibility. Denial of omnipotence may at first shock our traditionally cultivated feelings and may suggest a trifling with the divine character by puny human logomachy. But the affirmation of omnipotence, when pushed to extremes, leads to a dilemma, which, as we have seen, can be met only by denying or transmuting or attenuating the fact of evil. To the honest doubters facing such a dilemma the denial of some of the attributes of the divine character traditionally held would render a better service than the mystifying of the divine personality with illogical thoughts.

III. Conclusion—Current Tendency in the Conception of God. (1) Evil as Rival Principle to God. The hypothesis of a finite God without unlimited power who is not the Creator of the universe, as far as we have investigated, seems to be intellectually a more defensible position than the logically untenable conception of an absolute God. There is today a strong current tendency toward a conception of God which modifies or denies the divine absoluteness and omnipotence. God is more and more frankly conceived to be a finite being struggling against evil. The reality of evil is more and more recognized as a rival principle to God the principle of good. It is natural for us to imagine a personal reality of evil as well as of good at the moment of intense experience. Wm. James analyzing his experience in a California earthquake says, "First I personified the earthquake as a permanent individual entity. . . To some apparently, a vague, demoniac power; to me an individualized thing."[28] The anonymous author of *Evil and Evolution* solves the problem of evil likewise by insisting on the reality of Devil as an intruder into the universe of our good God, while James, McTaggart, and others, solve the problem by a pluralistic hypothesis. Prof. James Maine

[28] Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 100.

Dixon in conversation with me said a few years ago that if you deny the reality of the Devil, making him a mere psychical "eject," you must also deny the reality of God, for the latter, no more and no less than the former, would be a mere imaginative construct. Theism cannot monopolize reality for God alone. And if you admit anything undivine as real in the cosmos, you must be prepared to confess that God is not an absolute but a finite being who is struggling against the non-divine elements of the universe. Our faith should be a belief in the steady progress of his cause and his final triumph by our zealous coöperation in his world-transcending task that can be achieved only through the practice of righteousness and love.

(2) Changed Metaphysics, Changed Theology. This conception of a finite God is in harmony with a current tendency of thought, which has been strongly affected or almost revolutionalized by the evolutionary view of biological science. The old static view of things has yielded to the dynamic view of becoming and development. Things were formerly judged in relation to an unchangeable substance or Absolute. Philosophy was a science of this unchangeable reality. But philosophy today is responding to the spirit of empirical science. Says John Dewey, "Philosophy will have to surrender all pretention to be peculiarly concerned with ultimate reality, or with reality as a complete (i. e., completed) whole: with *the* real object."[29] "For centuries," says he further, "political and moral interests were bound up with the distinction between the absolutely real and the relatively real."[30] But modern science asserts that there is nothing absolute in our experience; all things are relative as to their genesis and function. Things are what they are through the process of becoming. Bergson goes even so far in his dynamic view of creative evolution as to deny the existence of things. "There are no things; there are only actions." Fichte we remember said long ago that "*Am Anfang war die Tat,*" in place of the Biblical expression "In the beginning there was Word." According to the Bergsonian conception of an *elan vital* and its ceaseless flux, "God has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom."[31] God is thus a growing being and therefore finite. The old theology of an absolute God which was based upon the static view of things is giving way to the evolutionary conception of the universe—of God and man. A new mataphysics demands a new theology. The movement is thus a symptom of the profound theological transformation taking place in our day.

[29] Dewey, *Creative Intelligence*, p. 53.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[31] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 248.

(3) The Temper of Our Age and Theological Transformation. The theological transformation is involved in the prevalent temper of our age with which we look at social evils. Traditional theology and philosophy looked upon everything in its general abstract aspect and interpreted it only in its bearing on the whole of reality. Evils were thus considered to be either outbalanced or overruled by good, or attenuated by its utility as a means to good ends. Such a consummate philosopher as Hegel who is the founder of modern monistic absolutism regarded evil as a sort of intellectual error. Evil for Hegel was "a negative which, though it would fain assert itself, has no real persistence, and is, in fact, only the absolute sham-existence of negativity in itself."[32] Evil is thus a mere negation, privation, and in the end, an illusion. His absolutistic followers, such as Bradley and Royce, as we have seen in our discussion of the problem of evil, take more or less a similar attitude toward evil, all tending to ignore it from the viewpoint of the total reality. But the current pragmatic view of life would treat even "lies, dreams, insanities, deceptions, myths, theories," as Dewey puts it, as real "events" in their particularistic aspect as well as in their general aspect, and give them a voice in our democratic metaphysics of experience (James). In this changed state of thought we are increasingly coming to a more realistic and vigorous recognition of evil and a corresponding emphasis on moral aggressiveness against evil as indisputable fact of life. The practical investigation of the social problems involved in the defective, the dependent, the delinquent, or poverty and prostitution, alcoholism and other social diseases, is constantly calling our attention to a radical reform movemnt. A moral protest against institutionalized evils such as are connected with sweating industry, child labor, trade union, labor union, trust, syndicate, capitalism, socialism, etc., is raising a battle cry for the downfall of vested power and inherited prestige. Such a democratic movement of social emancipation today, with its slogan of "Humanity First," is quite in contrast to the naive optimism of the past generations which took a static and complacent attitude toward existing evils under the influence of absolutist theology and left undone the necessary improvements to be made on human affairs to the gracious care of an omnipotent God. The new conception of a finite God who, through the coöperation of his loyal men, is constantly struggling against every form of evil, exactly fits in with the temper of our age, and is perfectly consistent with the general outlook of our social progress.

[32] Hegel, *Logic*, trans. by Wallace, p. 71.

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